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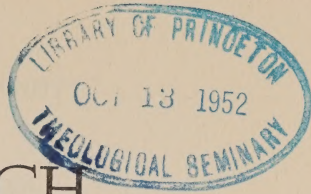




THE CHURCH  
IN  
COMMUNITY ACTION







# THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY ACTION

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HARVEY SEIFERT

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# THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY ACTION

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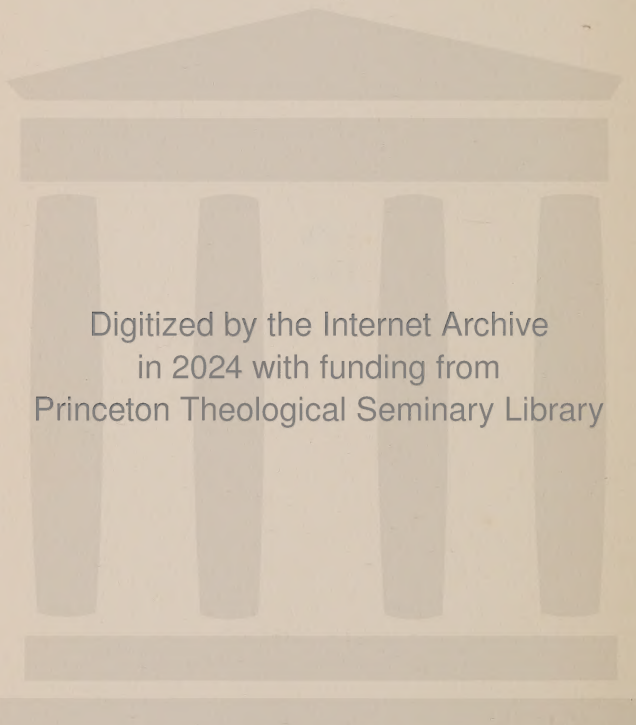
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## PREFACE

ONE proposition for which one could get unanimous approval, with no dissenting vote, from our otherwise divided generation is "Something ought to be done about it." Definitions of the word "something" in this context would vary, to be sure, but our social plight is so utterly apparent and so desperately grievous that everyone would urge improvement of one sort or another.

Two questions still perplex us, however. What is the most desirable form of change? How may that change be produced? In attempting to answer the first of these questions we have at hand a vast array of scholarly or moronic analyses—the suggested classification depending somewhat on the reader's point of view. At any rate, our library shelves bulge with prescriptions aplenty to ease our plight. In response to the latter question, concerning the strategies by which we may move from present problems to valid solutions, available materials are much less extensive. The fact that this has been a neglected area has contributed to a widespread feeling of frustration and futility. In the face of extremely difficult problems and highly resistant evils the "little man" on the street, who is the big man in a democracy, has often concluded that there is nothing which he can do about the difficulties of mass society. Especially is the church poverty-stricken at this point. There is no systematic and comprehensive handbook on techniques of community action available to the local congregation. It is this need which this book attempts to supply.

Fortunately, other disciplines have in recent years developed a great deal of source material from which such a handbook could be compiled. The sciences of sociology, social group work, social psychology, and political science provide a number of relevant and basic studies. The group dynamics and

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community organization movements, for example, are rich in their implications for the work of the church. In addition there are some scattered pamphlets or chapters, and a growing quantity of case material available from church sources.

The attempt is made in the chapters that follow to draw together findings from these several sources into an orderly and somewhat comprehensive discussion presented in nontechnical language, primarily for ministers and thoughtful laymen. It is hoped that the book will be of value to ministers' training schools, theological seminary classes, and local church pastors, as well as to members of congregational governing boards, committees on social action, peace, or temperance, and to concerned lay people in general.

The principles outlined are sufficiently general and the illustrations sufficiently varied that this material should be useful in both rural and urban situations, in large and small churches, and in churches of different denominational polity. No book, of course, can outline a specific program which will fit all situations. Such a program must be creatively refined out of the fires of local research and discussion. This is a resource book to provide stimulus and suggestions for that process.

These pages undoubtedly suffer from many of the weaknesses characteristic of pioneer efforts, as well as from other defects due to my inadequacies. Most of what appears here has been tested, however, in experience and in the thoughts of specialists in their fields. If this presentation stimulates a wider experimentation and the accumulation of a still richer body of experience, its compilation will have been justified. Community action is a fundamental function of the church. We dare no longer neglect a thorough exploration and wide popularization of its basic techniques.

HARVEY SEIFERT



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## CHAPTER I

### TOWARD A FUNCTIONAL CHURCH

RELIGION may damage communities as well as improve them. Which of the two consequences will be typical depends upon the prevailing kind of religion and upon the common form of its expression. A few years ago thoughtful churchmen were startled by a study published by E. L. Thorndike,<sup>1</sup> which showed that in the sample of cities covered there was an inverse correlation between religious activity and community welfare. Where the membership of churches was greater, the index of general community goodness—including such factors as infant health, educational opportunities, high wages, good government, or the absence of slums and child labor—was lower. On the other hand, where there was apparently less interest in religion, there tended to be greater evidence of community well-being. While churches may not have injured their communities, at least they had not in general done anything conspicuous to improve their social conditions.

Further evidence to support the same conclusion has more recently been accumulated by A. L. Porterfield, a sociologist who is personally friendly to the church. Using procedures similar to those of Thorndike in a study of states rather than cities, his statistics pointed to the same conclusion.<sup>2</sup> Those states in which there was a higher percentage of ministers,

<sup>1</sup> *Your City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1939), especially pp. 96-100.

<sup>2</sup> "The Church and Social Well-Being," *Sociology and Social Research*, January-February, 1947.

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churches, and church members tended to be the least desirable states in which to live, while those with less religious activity by and large had higher social welfare ratings.

Alongside these disturbing research findings individual case studies have shown that here and there isolated local congregations are making unusual contributions to the transformation of their communities.<sup>1</sup> Organized religion can perform such a function. Yet in general it has not done so. The only possible conclusion is that too few churches have been effectively concerned about community conditions. Their emphasis has been otherworldly or individualistic. Deteriorating influences in their neighborhoods have had nothing to fear; they could continue their costly depredations undisturbed.

Further evidence of the same inadequacy of the church can be found in the larger community also. On the world-wide front our generation faces a serious accumulation of important cultural lags. Either we must rapidly achieve the political organization of the world, or we will inevitably suffer atomic and bacteriological war. Either we must forge improved controls of our economic processes, or we will unavoidably experience repeated and ever more disastrous depressions. It is a commonly accepted thesis that the controls of social organization have not kept up with our technological discoveries. An even more basic weakness, however, is the fact that the ethical and religious insight of the population has lagged far behind the requirements of social organization. The church has proved to be ineffective to stop the drift toward ever more destructive war and disastrous social tensions. Repeatedly organized religion has offered too little too late, while society has gone on its tragic way without benefit of clergy.

"Any realistic study of religion," writes Elton Trueblood,



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"must recognize the decline of Christianity in our Western civilization." <sup>3</sup> Statistics may indicate that church membership in the United States stands at an all-time high, with 58 per cent of the population on the rolls, yet a majority of the people do not actively practice their professed faith. A name on the books is neither a worshiper in the pew nor a Christian in the shop or office. The church has lost influence in comparison with other social institutions. Modern civilization is being more decisively shaped by economic policy, political decisions, and public education than by the church. The faiths men live by are more likely to be scientism, nationalism, or materialism than Christianity. We pledge our real allegiance to new cars and finer clothes rather than to the Sermon on the Mount. It is astonishing that two things can be true at the same time in America—a steady increase in church membership and a more powerful and widespread influence of secularism. Berdyaev has suggested that "Christianity is going back to the state she enjoyed before Constantine: she has to undertake the conquest of the world afresh." <sup>4</sup>

Because the church has not presented a sufficiently adequate and compelling program, men are turning to other organizations for help on their day-to-day problems. A number of observers of contemporary British life have reported that increasingly citizens of that country are finding in the Labor Party or in the co-operative movement or in some other reform group the sort of satisfaction of needs they once sought in the church. Cameron P. Hall, commenting on the alarming decline in church attendance in England, reported:

<sup>3</sup> "The New Comparative Religion," in *The Church and Organized Movements*, ed. Randolph C. Miller (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *The End of Our Time* (New York: Sheed & Ward, Inc., 1933), p. 170.

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The churches are felt to be irrelevant to the personal and social needs of the individual and his family, and therefore not calling for direct participation in them. The relation of the individual to the church is largely ceremonial. His church is enshrined in British tradition as a place where babies are to be baptized, children are to be confirmed, young people are to be married, and old people are to be buried. But it is neither the present intention nor custom to support the churches by attendance and activity. The British people have in truth walked out of their churches.<sup>5</sup>

An important cause of this exodus, Hall points out, is that people feel as a result of their experience in their own parish church that organized religion has been indifferent to the practical problems of the people and that it is therefore irrelevant to the crucial issues of modern life.

If these serious weaknesses are to be overcome and if the church is to play a more powerful part in community welfare, churchmen must admit the necessity of considerably modifying their recent practice. That congregation which proposes to maintain the traditional program and that minister who intends to remain the usual sort of clergyman are likely to be betraying the will of God and the best interests of the church. They are merely perpetuating a pattern which has proved inadequate for the world-transforming purpose of the church. The curse of social ineffectuality hangs heavily upon the modern ministry. Our efforts may have meliorated individual personalities, but they are not changing communities. A plus element must be added to the character of the average local church. The success of the church is to be judged not primarily in terms of the growth of average attendance, active

<sup>5</sup> "British Labor and the Churches," *Social Action*, December 15, 1948, p. 12. Used by permission.

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membership, or size of budget, but in terms of personal and community change in conformity with the purposes of God. These are the reasons for the existence of the church. Unless it performs these distinctive functions, there are no continuing reasons for its existence. The modern church must become more functional in its emphasis, concentrating its energies more directly and more expertly on the transformation of men and society.

The more neglected of these two functions is that of community reformation, using the term "community" in its widest sense. A community is ordinarily defined as a group of people residing in the same geographical area and sharing common social institutions. Persons living in the same neighborhood constitute a community sharing, for example, the same elementary school and the same day-to-day shopping center. These same people belong also to numerous other communities moving out in concentric circles from their local neighborhood. They share the political and economic institutions of their city or their rural town-country community. So also the state and nation constitute communities, and increasingly as trade or political organizations become global, it is appropriate to speak of a world community. The church's responsibility for community improvement extends into all of these areas. Community action begins at home, but it does not end there. It reaches into the uttermost parts of the earth. The concern of the church is as wide as the interest of God in the last and the least member of the family of mankind.

The goal of community change in theological terms is the Kingdom of God. In sociological language it is community organization. Social organization may be defined as a condition of such creative relationships among members of a community and between them and their total environment as

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supply the conditions for the fullest development of each person in the group. The concept of community organization is the sociological counterpart of the psychological concept of integration. It stands in contrast to disorganization, which involves a disruption of relationships and the appearance of social problems. The indices of community disorganization include juvenile delinquency, divorce, poverty, and war.

Certain conditions likewise characterize the well-organized community, be it a neighborhood or the world. What makes a community good? Nine criteria might be listed:

1. Order—security of life and property, efficient government
2. Economic well-being—security of income, a high standard of living, equal opportunity
3. Physical development—well-planned homes and general facilities, health and sanitation
4. Constructive leisure-time opportunities—provision for wholesome recreation and esthetic appreciations
5. Sound ethical standards—a high code of morality commonly accepted and practiced
6. Mental health—educational opportunity, adequate personality adjustments
7. Ample communication—free avenues of expression, active primary groups, high morale
8. Democratic participation—feeling of civil responsibility, readiness to place the common welfare ahead of private interest, community-wide organization for universal participation in one common life
9. Spiritual motivation—vital, active religious associations permeating the entire community life <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This list is adapted from Eduard C. Lindeman, *The Community* (New



It is communities such as these which approach the plan of God. To their creation the church ought to be functionally committed.

Well-organized communities, it ought to be noted, are characterized by a high degree of consensus. Instead of the atomization and conflict of the disorganized community, social organization involves co-operative effort aimed at commonly accepted goals. Every department-store purchase is now evidence of a prevailing consensus with respect to the transfer of private property. Every wedding is testimony to agreement regarding monogamy. So in the ideal community there is substantial unanimity with regard to the proper definition of all important social situations. Pulling at cross purposes is kept at a minimum. There is general acceptance of an adequate pattern of customary procedures.

If a community is to be progressive, however, consensus is never perfect. Continuous adjustment is necessary to novel elements. Society is dynamic. Because we have not yet entered into Utopia, there is constant change in some aspect of our culture. It has been said that the age of Washington resembles that of Nero more than it does our modern machine civilization. We therefore face an adjustment without precedent. Alongside change there also exists resistance to change. The conflict between old and new elements in a culture may lead to critical conditions of disorganization.

This has been formulated by the sociologists into the theory of cultural lag. Inventions in one area of our culture result in inconsistencies and tensions with other areas. The invention of atom-bearing bombers is no longer consistent with national

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York: Association Press, 1921), pp. 14-15. Compare also Wayland J. Hayes, *The Small Community Looks Ahead* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., Inc., 1947), pp. 11-15.

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sovereignty as a political principle. Unless we achieve an international organization more appropriate to modern technology, we shall experience an even greater rending of the fabric of our common life. The introduction of novel elements into a relatively stable social situation leads to disorganization. Unless this is followed by reorganization, disorganization becomes chronic, and society disintegrates.

Great as its weaknesses may be in other respects, the Marxian dialectical interpretation of history made a similar point. Any social situation develops within itself elements of its own contradiction. Through the interaction of these contradictory elements the old ways are destroyed, and a new system of social relationships emerges. History has been a continuous movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis.

Community reconstruction is therefore the process of achieving a moving equilibrium in social affairs. It necessitates a continuous process of readjustment. In the progressive community, organization, disorganization, and reorganization are constantly succeeding each other. Indeed, they are all simultaneously present in various areas of community life. As in the case of a bicycle or a spinning top the movement itself may bring stability. Maladjustment may be an indication of impending progress if it is wisely handled. While chronic conflict is fatal, creative conflict is the process by which a community develops more perfect health.

The church has a basic contribution to make to this process of continuous reconstruction in the direction of a lofty social ideal. The demand of perfection which is inherent in the concept of the will of God is both a goad and a goal for social endeavor. A compelling concern to transform all conditions which blight human personality is an outgrowth of commitment to the Christian way. Religion at its best always pro-

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duces nonconformists at every point of prevailing imperfection. These creative spirits may find through the church a relationship to the power of God which sustains them through the travail of opposition and persecution. The church also emphasizes the necessity of fellowship among divergent elements, making Christian love a lubricant for keeping conflict creative. With all these resources to offer, the church ought to be the most effective of all our social institutions in achieving community well-being. If it is to fill that neglected niche, it must, however, become a more functional church with a stronger community concern.

More precisely what would this mean? The nature of the functional church can be more clearly seen by listing several contrasts in comparison with its opposite, the institutionalized church. While no local church would probably fall completely in one category or the other, there are tendencies toward institutionalization in all congregations which must be reversed and possibilities for functional development which must be cultivated.

1. For one thing the functional church is purposive. The end of its existence is determinative in its planning. The necessary institutional machinery and the details of routine are dealt with as rapidly as possible in order that time and resources may be conserved for projects which contribute directly to the transformation of men and communities. In the institutionalized church, on the other hand, means are time and energy consuming. Institutionalism may, as a matter of fact, be defined as the attempt to preserve the structure of a social institution while denying its function. Many an idealistic young minister has entered into the work of his first charge fired with enthusiasm for the major work of the church. Then he has found raising the budget, remodeling

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the sanctuary, or staffing the church school consumed so much lay and ministerial effort that soon he was content to spend his time in keeping the wheels going round and in denying his first fine vision. Or a congregation may try to balance its budget by toning down certain aspects of the gospel in order not to offend important contributors. In so doing it also effectively forgets its function in trying to preserve its structure.

2. The functional church is person-centered and community-conscious, while the institutionalized church tends to be program-centered and denomination-minded. The functional church recognizes its purpose to be the transformation of people, individually and in groups. It is interested, therefore, in every resident of the community whether he lives in a shack by the tracks or in a home on the hills. Such a church discovers its program in the needs of its community.

The institutionalized church is more willing to adopt uncritically the program suggested by a national board or denominational agency, whether or not it fits the local conditions. There are values, of course, in a national denominational program. It makes possible a united impact on the larger community, and it builds morale in the local congregation. It is likely to be outlined by specialists who are more competent than local leadership, and if it is wisely planned, it has the needs of the typical community in mind. The wise administrator, however, will not ask that such a program be adopted uncritically. He will urge adaptation to obvious differences in local situations. Blind institutional loyalty is not in the best interests of the institution, and it may seriously injure the people whom the institution is trying to serve. A glaring example is the undue multiplication of weak churches in small communities or urban neighborhoods, because each con-



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gregation is denomination-minded instead of community-minded.

3. The functional church is contemporary in reference, whereas the institutionalized church is more likely to be historical in emphasis. Because of the difficulty of modern problems we are often tempted to spend a great deal of time on the description of conditions in Jesus' day or on an expository homily based on the original Greek meaning of a verb. Then we crowd in as a hurried afterthought a few words of "application" to modern conditions. It is unfortunately true that the date line on many of our religious publications might as well be 1849 as 1949. This is not to deny the importance of a historical perspective nor the timelessness of fundamental principles, but this is to say that historical background and basic principles are valuable only as they contribute to contemporary decision.

Unless the church places its emphasis on the contemporary, Charles Kingsley's description of worship in a cathedral becomes again appropriate. Said he, "The scanty service rattled in the vast building like a dried kernel too small for its cell. The place breathed imbecility and unreality and sleepy life in death, while the whole nineteenth century went roaring on its way outside."

The life-situation approach is appropriate to the functional emphasis. Preaching ought to begin with the needs of the congregation in its community. John Bennett quotes a board secretary who confessed that he becomes more pessimistic about the church the more he analyzes the sermons he hears. Bennett adds, "I think that it is a safe generalization that the greatest single weakness of American Protestantism is to be found in the number of local churches in which the worshiper is frustrated. (One should add to these the number of local

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churches where the worshiper would be frustrated if he understood more fully than he does the meaning of the Gospel.)”<sup>7</sup>

Worship materials ought to have meaning in terms of modern life, lest whole congregations share the reaction of the visiting chaplain who wrote, “I came to pray and remained to scoff.” Unfortunately we do not have an adequate number of hymns and liturgies to express, for example, our concern for wholesome working conditions or for the prevention of juvenile delinquency. A field scarcely touched is the development of symbols and expressions which will lift the distinctive needs of modern laymen reverently to God in meaningful worship.

Somewhere in its program the functional church will encourage the discussion of vital timely issues. Because these topics are usually controversial, we have frequently avoided them. Halford Luccock described many congregations when he spoke of the church functionary whose first commandment is, “Thou shalt not upset the apple cart.” It is, however, especially at points of controversy that the church must bear its witness, for it is at those points that the future direction of civilization is being determined. To avoid such issues is to abdicate the claim of the church to shape society.

4. Because the community needs change, the functional church will expect to adopt novel procedures from time to time. The institutionalized church, on the other hand, is more firmly rooted in tradition. Because a church has always had a prayer meeting every Wednesday and a bazaar every November is no reason for continuing these practices without change on into the twenty-seventh century. The reluctance to recog-

<sup>7</sup> “The Limitations of the Church,” in *The Gospel, the Church and the World*, ed. Kenneth Scott Latourette (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), pp. 154-55.

nize altered circumstances is illustrated by the Cape Cod deacon who, when his minister suggested a celebration of an approaching centennial anniversary of the church, replied, "Well, I don't know. We've never held one before."

The recognition that emphases and procedures must be modified to fit the changing needs of the time does not mean that the church ought to skip from one new fad to the next, rushing to adopt every novel suggestion that is made. Possibilities must be carefully weighed and programs critically adopted. A traditional item will have no superior claim because of its antiquity, however. It is to be accepted only if it still contributes to present needs. The church has often compromised easily with whatever practices prevailed in the world. It has frequently become what it was once said to be in England, "the Conservative Party at prayer." The church can remain true to its social function only as it dares to be dangerously adventurous in loyalty to its highest ideals.

This readiness to re-examine and modify its program has led to some of the greatest achievements of the church. Before other agencies were establishing institutions of higher learning, the church was founding colleges. When hospitals or orphanages were needed, the church was often the first to provide them. Frequently the church has been the pioneer explorer into an uncharted wilderness. It cannot continue, however, only to rest on its historical accomplishments. Into what untrodden areas must the church now venture if it is to meet distinctive modern needs? Perhaps workers' education is now needed as desperately as colleges once were. Perhaps religious television programs will become the modern counterpart of street preaching. Whether it is in these areas or in others, certainly the functional church must become adept at continuous adaptation to changing circumstances.

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5. As the functional church is interested in all men, so is it also concerned about every area of their lives. It acts upon a comprehensive interpretation of the role of religion, whereas the institutionalized church often seems to restrict religion to certain pious personal practices. The answer to the question, "What doth the Lord require of thee?" is not completed by saying, "Pray daily, parade to church weekly, and pay the preacher monthly." Scarcely any responsible leader of the church would admit that sort of theoretical definition of religion. Yet many a local congregation seems content with it, for it is asking no more of its members than time, talk, and tithes.

The practices of local churches have yet to be sufficiently affected by the growing conviction of ecclesiastical leaders that Christianity has a message for economic affairs, international policy, political issues, or any other matter that involves ethical decision and that affects the personalities of men. The church has more to say on all of these matters than does the social scientist or the secular reformer. While organized religion ought to find its subject matter in its community, it does not find its message there. It does not come to its conclusions on the great issues of life on the basis of the latest Gallup poll. It seeks rather to bring the judgment of God to bear on all human institutions. To the extent that any area of life is left immune from this process, society is the poorer, and the church is derelict in its duty.

6. The functional church considers it normal to supplement discussion with action. The activities of the institutionalized church often begin and end in vocalization. It is astonishing to recognize how much of the energy of religious groups is devoted to talk. We set talk to music in our hymns. We add reverent inflections in our prayers. We arrange it more or



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less logically in sermons or discussion groups. About as close as we normally come to other forms of action is to arrange words into resolutions, usually, however, passed within the safe and soundproof confines of our meeting halls.

The aims of the church cannot be realized so long as we perpetuate this preoccupation. Ringing doorbells, mimeographing flyers, or interviewing editors and mayors must come to be considered as appropriate for churchmen as teaching a church-school class or cooking a men's-club dinner. The whispers of Christian idealists are often overwhelmed by the shouts of selfish interest groups because men of religion have not mastered the strategies necessary for effective action. Without descending to unworthy devices both individual churchmen and the church as an institution must now develop the requisite skills of practical action.

## CHAPTER II

### *DISCOVERING AREAS FOR ACTION*

EFFECTIVE ACTION must fit the facts rather than flit after fanciful fantasies. Churches have often spent years of effort and thousands of dollars in a program based on sentiment or hunches which proved to be inaccurate. They have done those things which they ought not to have done and have left undone those things which they should have done. It is poor strategy to empty one's gun at the heads of straw men while lions and tigers roam the jungle seeking whom they may devour.

The program of the church must be appropriate to the actual needs and the realistic conditions of the community as revealed through reliable data. This requires scientific study rather than the informal observation on which most ministers and congregations rely. The new minister often gets the weightiest impression of what he believes to be the character of his parish from the layman who happens first to invite him to dinner. A layman may conclude that there is an unusually high rate of juvenile delinquency in the neighborhood because he happened one evening to have the hub caps stolen from his car. If such judgments are accurate, it is purely coincidental. Many churchmen generalize on the basis of illustrations and act on the basis of partial knowledge or actual misconceptions. To build a church program on no more solid a foundation than this is as dangerous as it would be for a doctor to write a prescription without having examined the patient. Yet the church at this point lags far behind secular agencies. The busi-

ness world carefully tests its advertising techniques or personnel policies. Movie producers and radio executives carefully survey audience reaction. Public utilities would not think of expanding their facilities without a scientifically conducted survey. Certainly the church, with a purpose more important than any of these, can do no less.

Program building ought to be done on the basis of data which is objective and comprehensive instead of subjective and partial. This requires a scientific study including at least three parts: (1) a survey of the community, in the full concentric circle meaning of that term, to discover actual needs; (2) a study of the local church to discover resources, both present and potential; and (3) a relating of the two in a series of program recommendations. If the church is to become effective in the community, it is as urgent that laymen should demand such a survey as it is that they balance the annual budget. It should be considered as important for the minister to leave a parish survey for his successor as it is to leave a constituency list.

Who should make such a study? How may one best organize for the task? The principle here is to enlist as inclusive and capable a group as possible. The more inclusive a group is at work, the more people will have their interest aroused. There is no better way of incorporating the findings of a survey into the thought and life of a church than by having its members and officials gather the facts and draw the conclusions. An excellent way to arouse an entire community is to have its churches unitedly conduct a community survey. Better than a lonely clergyman making a survey, therefore, is participation by the official governing body of the church. Better than the governing board as sponsor is a congregational meeting. Better than a single congregation is

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the local council of churches. Especially when the idea is a new one, however, it may not be possible to secure the sponsorship of as inclusive a group as one might desire. In that case the project is important enough that it ought nevertheless to be carried out. As inclusive a group as possible, but as restricted a group as necessary, should be used. Even if the minister must do the work alone, it is still wise for him to do so for his own guidance.

Obviously the area which can be covered in a survey is limited by the number of workers available. It may be necessary to select only the most important items to be covered. Only as ambitious a study should be attempted as can be completed. For the sake both of the morale of the group and of the quality of the findings it is better to complete a less inclusive survey than it is to leave a full study unfinished.

The group working on the survey should be as well trained as possible. That church is fortunate which can enlist a competent social scientist from a near-by college or an appropriate staff person from a local social agency. Under the supervision of the minister or other qualified person many lay people can, however, do a thoroughly satisfactory job, especially after a bit of training as to the necessary qualities of accuracy, objectivity, or thoroughness.

While the sponsoring body should be as broad as possible, the group actually doing the work should be organized as a survey committee. Ideally this committee should include representatives of all the co-operating organizations. It might well be broken down into subcommittees to gather data in various areas (such as economic conditions or church membership statistics) or to carry through various aspects of the survey procedure (such as publicity, tabulating data, or writing the report). In studying the local church each organization

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(such as the church school, women's society, or youth group) might be asked to set up a committee to study its own group and matters related to its purpose (as finances to the official board or recreational facilities to the youth fellowship).

When a co-operating group has been secured, what should they study? This involves, for one thing, defining the geographical area to be covered. Since the task of religion involves the community in its most inclusive sense, no survey of the social situation in which the church finds itself is complete until it has explored national and world conditions as well as local neighborhood problems. Defining these larger communities to be studied does not present a serious obstacle. The boundaries of the earth or of states are fixed by creation or by constitutions! The most troublesome problem lies in bounding the local parish which ought to be studied intensively as one part of a more comprehensive survey.

The method to be used in defining a local parish varies somewhat depending upon the location of the church. In general it ought to include the area from which the church draws its membership or from which it ought to expect to draw its constituents. On this basis the rural church will ordinarily find the most meaningful unit for study to be the town-country community. Such a community consists of a village and that portion of the surrounding countryside which turns to the village center for its essential services. Its boundaries can be determined by questioning village merchants, school officials, or ministers regarding the spread of their clientele. Often the boundaries of a consolidated high-school district will be found to coincide roughly with the limits of the community. Or one might note on important highways the points at which the deepest worn ruts in farm lanes stop



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turning toward one village and begin turning toward the next.<sup>1</sup>

The church in a larger town or small city will be wise to consider the entire city as its parish. The same thing is true to a lesser extent of the downtown church in a large metropolis, although it ought also to study more intensively the needs of people in the central section of the city. The local parish of a city church outside the central business district can be bounded by considering:

1. The boundaries of natural areas, such as the slums, the zone of workingmen's homes, the area of middle-class residences, or the wealthier suburbs. These areas are often rather clearly defined in the metropolis, and while churches ought to cross such boundaries in their ministry, they often in actual practice tend to attract most of their constituents from only one of these groups.

2. Important transportation arteries. Railroad tracks, super-highways, or even busy thoroughfares often constitute barriers which people do not easily cross.

3. Local neighborhoods. Frequently a shopping district or a school will give a certain unity to a district, which may be symbolized by a neighborhood name, such as Morningside Heights or Bunker Hill.

4. The location of neighboring churches. The parish line may bulge into an unchurched area and may be contracted in another direction where there is a near-by church of somewhat similar theological and sociological characteristics.

5. The residences of members of the church. A spot map

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Rockwell C. Smith, *The Church in Our Town* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), chaps. 2, 3.

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of actual church members is a basic instrument for determining parish boundaries.

When all these factors are taken into account, it is possible to bound the approximate area for which a local church has primary responsibility.

County, ward, or other legal subdivisions do not always coincide with sociological reality; they must be used with caution as a basis for delimiting a parish. If, however, the parish line does happen roughly to coincide with such a subdivision, as a township or a census tract, it is easier to obtain certain types of data. In any event, it must be repeatedly emphasized, a thorough community study begins in the local parish, but it also goes beyond it to study the general characteristics of the city, nation, and world as a whole.

In these various areas from the local to the global what subjects ought to be explored? On the matter of items to be covered in a local parish survey several excellent guides are available and ought to be consulted.<sup>2</sup> These sources confine themselves to the local community; for a comprehensive survey they need to be supplemented by similar lists of topics to be studied in the larger community. The world is a part of the parish of every vital church just as much as is its immediate neighborhood. Localism is a sin as well as institutionalism. As a matter of fact, many local problems cannot be solved unless action is taken on the national or world scene. To build a congregational program on the basis of only local

<sup>2</sup> For the urban parish see Murray H. Leiffer, *The Effective City Church* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), Part III and Appendixes; and Everett L. Perry, *Some Suggestions for Church-Community Surveys* (New York: Board of National Missions, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1948). For the rural community consult Edmund de Schweinitz Brunner, *Surveying Your Community* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1925), and Dwight Sanderson and Robert A. Polson, *Rural Community Organization* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1939), Appendix B.

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needs is as reprehensible as it would be to give a tubercular patient only cough syrup for his throat while neglecting the condition of his lungs.

In addition to the study of its community the characteristics of the local church membership, resources, and program must also be surveyed. Guesswork, including "ministerial statistics" on church attendance, is no more appropriate regarding ecclesiastical affairs than it is with respect to social conditions. Out of an objective study of the defects and possibilities of the church in relationship to community needs emerge recommendations for congregational action.

An outline for a comprehensive survey covering both the local and the larger community and the individual church is suggested in the appendix of this book. There is therefore no need here for a detailed discussion of subjects to be covered. A few of the topics there listed might well be used, however, as illustrations of the significance of this sort of study. It may seem to be a tedious task to cover such a multiplicity of materials. Yet if one is to base the program of his church on facts rather than fancy, there is no substitute for at least a general survey of each of the major topics. One may discover that in his neighborhood there is no particular problem at the point of recreational facilities, for example, but he has no business to come to such a conclusion until he has surveyed the situation. At points where a real difficulty appears there is obvious need to go beyond a general survey to a more specific and detailed study. While each subject suggested may not be crucial in all situations, each topic suggested is important in some situation.

The history of the community, for example, may include such recent experiences of failure in a particular area as to make a program item in that sphere inadvisable. The condi-

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tion of housing and the occupational distribution in a neighborhood are important keys to understanding its class composition and therefore its attitudes and needs. A social-resources study of a community may reveal potential allies which the church has never used. A zoning map is a key for predicting future community development which must be taken into account in any plans for expansion. A house-to-house religious census, which is an important part of every full survey, will not only uncover prospective church members but will reveal much concerning the attitudes of the people toward religion. A church cannot exert the most effective influence in its community unless it is aware of the existing theological and sociological attitudes and prejudices of its population. A minister cannot preach the most meaningful sermons unless he knows the educational attainment and general background of his congregation and his constituents.

A study of the age and sex distribution of church and church-school members may reveal unsuspected points of weakness in the program. A study of membership gains and losses may revitalize the membership committee. An analysis of leadership or financial contributions may reveal neglected groups or untapped resources. A program study may convince church organizations that they have neglected many areas in a monotonous emphasis on a warped conception of religion.

If enough has been said to indicate the relevance of the subjects proposed for study, what sources may be tapped and what methods may be used for gathering the necessary factual information? Appropriate sources are indicated in connection with each major subject in the outline in the appendix. These include various local records and publications, the U. S. Census (which for many religious leaders is



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an undiscovered uranium mine of sorely needed information, especially about larger communities), community organizations and agencies, and individuals who have a contribution to make at specific points. Sources for the study of the larger national or world community will be largely documentary but can be drawn from a variety of sources, such as standard books, current newspapers, or reports of church and public agencies. For a more complete classification of such sources the appendix should be consulted.

Sometimes information on a particular subject will already have been compiled by another agency or an earlier study. Councils of social agencies may have accumulated material in a field of interest closely related to that of the church. Banks and public-utility companies, as an indispensable guide to their business activities, or city and county planning commissions, in discharging their varied functions, are likely to have made surveys useful also for planning by the church. To disregard such easily available sources is to create unnecessary labor for the survey committee. Usually individuals or community organizations are anxious to share what they know. Often a call from a local minister is an unprecedented but highly welcome experience for them. Frequently they are eager for church co-operation and will grasp any opportunity to establish a friendly relationship with church leaders who demonstrate a genuine community concern. Relationships established by the church during a community survey will often prove later to be valuable in many other ways.

In the use of all these sources of information one must observe proper criteria of scientific reliability. Conclusions are no sounder than the data are reliable. There is no substitute for accuracy and objectivity. One must consciously seek, as far as that is possible, to set aside his own biases and to



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avoid looking through the eyes of past conditioning. He is not a debater trying to prove his own preconceived position to be true; he is a research student seeking facts on all sides of the issue. This is an attitude considerably more difficult to maintain in social research than in the investigation of physical phenomena. A man can count the rings in the trunk of a fallen tree and report his findings without arousing his emotional complexes. It is much more difficult for a person who enjoys daily cocktails to admit that prohibition had important advantages, or for a lifelong member of a church to see that his church has been tragically inadequate in its program for world peace.

Several faults are common in amateur surveys. Often generalizations are based upon insufficient data. It is impossible to draw a valid general conclusion from a single illustration. To avoid this particularistic fallacy a group needs to gather a comprehensive body of data, painstakingly and systematically accumulating all the relevant information. Both the scientist and the average man are ignorant, but the scientist is often less so because he is more constantly curious.

A closely related fallacy is that of the unrepresentative sample. One surveyor, anxious to prove that marriages were occurring too early, excluded as "exceptions" all marriages in the records with participants over thirty years of age. By such an incomplete use of statistics unintentional liars can prove anything, from a too high average church attendance to a too low percentage of slum dwellings in a community. When complete data are not available, it is often necessary to study a smaller group as representative of the whole. When an attitude test on theological and social issues cannot be given to the entire constituency of a church, for example, it may well be given to a more easily available group within the

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church. But the conclusions drawn from such a test cannot be applied to the total constituency unless the composition of the small group exactly corresponds to that of the larger whole in all important variables, such as age, education, or economic status.

A third common form of self-deception is believing everything one sees in print. Much essential information can be unearthed from printed materials, but the information will be accurate only if the documents are used critically. False prophets must be avoided, even when they own a printing press. Caution is particularly necessary in the section of the survey dealing with national and world problems. There one must of necessity deal with controversial issues on which floods of propaganda have been released.

In dealing with any document, whether it is a discussion of the causes of war or a statistical report on local juvenile delinquency, it is necessary to ask several questions. Is this a primary source, presenting data gathered at firsthand, or a secondary source, interpreting other sources? Secondary sources are often, though not always, subject to error in proportion to the distance of their removal from the primary material. One ought to get back as close to the original as possible. Who is the author of the material in hand? Was he in a position to know? Did he have access to the necessary data? Is he a reliable and objective interpreter, or does a personal interest or bias distort his presentation? Officials whose job depends upon their effectiveness may sometimes issue ultraoptimistic reports. Groups which have a stake in a particular economic order may not always describe its consequences accurately.

Sometimes on bitterly contested issues it is not possible to find even reasonably objective materials. In such cases the

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only possible procedure is to analyze the presentation of all the important viewpoints. One might balance, for example, the publications of the National Association of Manufacturers against those of the C.I.O., or the claims of one political faction against those of another. Are there any points of agreement? Are there apparent inconsistencies or logical fallacies? Is it possible to check specific claims against more objective sources? In what ways would the general viewpoint of the group be expected to distort the selection of its material? Only by such procedures of careful evaluation is it possible to arrive at a closer approximation of the truth.

A fourth criterion for valid research may seem obvious, yet it is frequently disregarded. In asking for information one must always be careful to convey his intended meaning. This is especially relevant in phrasing queries in interviews or questionnaires. Always use nonambiguous terms which will be open to only one interpretation. For example, in searching for the amount of crime in a community is one seeking the number of complaints or arrests or convictions or prison sentences? In taking a religious census does the term "church preference" mean membership, attendance, or some more vague choice? In so far as possible precise quantitative data should be sought instead of subjective evaluations. The "quality" of a home may mean different things to various observers, but the number of rooms per resident or the presence of running water will be understood by all. Leading questions which suggest a specific answer must also be eliminated. To ask, "Do you believe in the church?" is likely to bring an affirmative response without revealing anything significant about the attitude of the respondent.

It is always well to test any questionnaire by giving it first to a smaller group which is comparable in interest and ability

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to the larger group for whom the questions are intended. On the basis of the reaction of the first group questions may be revised into more valid form for their purpose.<sup>3</sup>

When through the variety of procedures that have been described a comprehensive collection of data has been accumulated, the survey is by no means finished. The raw material must still be fashioned into a usable finished product. Counting the number of unemployed does not solve the unemployment problem, nor does it automatically outline a program for attacking the issue. What suggestions may be made for analyzing and interpreting the mass of material which has been brought together?

The first step is to classify the data into significant groupings. The headings of the survey outline provide the "pigeon-holes" into which material may be sorted. Information from a single source may have a bearing on several subjects and should be made available in the file folder or loose-leaf notebook devoted to each relevant area. As a result of such a sorting of accumulated data gaps may be revealed which need to be filled by further study.

When all significant data seems to be at hand, it must be carefully weighed. As William James once pointed out, "Facts are not born free and equal." Data differ in their pertinence. Even after the difficult labor of accumulating it some material may need to be discarded as relatively unrelated to the problem at hand. While one must avoid oversimplifying the picture or eliminating inconveniently contradictory evidence, he must also remember that the final report is more effective

\* For a more complete discussion of research techniques see C. Luther Fry, *The Technique of Social Investigation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1934); George A. Lundberg, *Social Research* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1942); or Pauline V. Young, *Scientific Social Surveys and Research* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949).



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when relevant facts are brought into relief. "An exhaustive report may also be an exhausting one to the reader."<sup>4</sup> Recommendations lose their force when they are obscured by a mass of extraneous detail.

Data must be weighed also with respect to their reliability. Is there reason to suspect the accuracy of any of the material under study? Are there inconsistencies in the information from various sources? What is the cause of such contradictions? What is likely to be a correct picture of the situation? Answering such questions as these requires the application of the criteria of scientific reliability discussed previously. It may also be necessary to recheck certain material or to make a further study of a particular area.

On the basis of data so classified and weighed the survey committee is ready to formulate generalizations describing the present character of the church and the community. It is particularly at this point that "a properly conducted survey is an excellent teacher of the fundamental moralities."<sup>5</sup> At the point of interpretation one's biases are most likely to warp his judgment. Religious honesty and stern objectivity are necessary if one is to be true to the data instead of manufacturing support for preconceived notions or desires. What are the similarities and differences, the sequences and correlations, in the data? What conclusions are warranted by these facts? It may be necessary to examine the data several times from different viewpoints until the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fit together.

If, for example, the occupational distribution of neighborhood residents shows a considerably higher percentage of

<sup>4</sup> Young, *op. cit.*, p. 507.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur L. Swift, *New Frontiers of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 162.



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unskilled laborers than are represented in the membership of the church, several interpretations may be possible. Perhaps this group has not been approached, or it may not be attracted by the current emphases of the church. Or this group may be predominantly Roman Catholic, or it may be finding full satisfaction for its religious needs in another Protestant church. Which of these is the correct interpretation can be determined only by a more comprehensive perusal of related data. Or, to use another illustration, the materials of the survey may indicate an influx of warehouses at one edge of the parish, a growing number of persons per dwelling unit, a rather high rate of juvenile delinquency, and a scattering to greater distances of the church membership. Such a combination of factors suggests the beginnings of deterioration in the area and the necessity for fundamental re-evaluation of the program of the church.

The accumulation of data, no matter how conscientiously done, is no substitute for creative thought. Disciplined imagination applied to the raw materials of a survey can lead to valid insight. Imagination without facts is likely to produce false nostrums. Facts without imagination, on the other hand, lead only to confusion. Imagination, however, must be guided by a sound knowledge of the social process. The more one knows about the social sciences, the more accurate are his interpretations likely to be. He will recognize in certain combinations of factors, processes or conditions which have been noted by other scholars in this field, and he will know the theory or social law which applies. To make his best contribution at this point every minister should be trained in the basic disciplines of the social sciences. To relieve his own inadequacies the materials of a survey may also be checked with such other expert interpreters as may be available in the

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community. When the desirability of sound sociological knowledge has been stressed it must also be said, however, that the "common sense" of the average churchman is adequate to discover many of the most apparent conclusions indicated by a collection of data. Training is advantageous, but no church can afford to neglect a comprehensive survey because it does not have available a varied assortment of Ph.D. candidates.

Analysis of survey data leads directly to the formulation of recommendations for the church program. The study of the local and the larger communities will have uncovered numerous needs. The study of the local church will have revealed attitudes and resources which may be used to meet the most crucial of the needs. It remains then to suggest specific projects through which the church may relate resources and attitudes and needs in a vitally functional program.

Various types of recommendation will be appropriate to different combinations of needs, resources, and attitudes.<sup>6</sup>

1. If an urgent need appears, matched by adequate resources and strong favoring attitudes, it is possible to recommend a program for direct treatment of the problem. If, for example, the world community is characterized by "cold wars" and stock piles of atomic bombs, and if there are numerous groups in the church interested in world peace but frustrated about how to implement their concern, then the program recommendation might well be a church-wide emphasis on peace education and action.

2. If there is a great community need and abundant church resources, but inadequate supporting attitudes on the part

<sup>6</sup> These four possible combinations are taken from Regina Westcott Wieman, "Where We Get Our Program," a mimeographed publication of the Family Community Project of Addison, Michigan.

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of the membership, the recommendation must be education of attitudes in order that at some time in the future a direct attack on the problem may be possible. If there has been a decided influx of unchurched Negroes into the parish, if the church building is large and well equipped, and if the membership is strongly prejudiced against interracial worship, the immediate program must become the nurture of Christian racial attitudes instead of opening at once the building to the Negroes.

3. If the combination found is that of an urgent need, favorable attitudes, and inadequate resources, the survey report must recommend the development of resources. Serious study may, for example, reveal large numbers of young people in the area without recreational facilities. The membership of the church may be disposed to provide such opportunities, but the existing building may lack the necessary space. The appropriate recommendation becomes the construction of a new building.

4. Finally, a survey may reveal little need, abundant resources, and favorable attitudes supporting the current use of the resources. The problem then becomes a re-education of existing attitudes in order to allow a redirection of resources to areas of greater need. A church in an area of transition where there is no longer need for its traditional type of program finds itself in this situation. It may need to take steps to devote its resources to an institutional church program to meet the altered conditions of the community.

Following these general lines of procedure, the group suggesting church policy will probably formulate a long list of possible recommendations. The functional church is concerned with world peace, race relations, political life, the economic order. Its members should be doing something

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about family disorganization, gambling, crime, commercialized recreation, unevangelized populations, foreign missions, and a multitude of other portentous matters. The prevalence of hookworm may demand a campaign to construct sanitary toilets. A lack of constructive leisure-time activities may make a community chorus desirable. Poor housing may call for lobbying for legislative relief. The list of illustrations could be indefinitely lengthened. Obviously no church in a single year can seriously consider all possible program items. Which then should be recommended to the congregation for study?

Three criteria may be suggested for selecting the most important projects. All other things being equal, the most fundamental problems should be dealt with first. It is more important to get at the roots of difficulties than it is to deal with the more superficial aspects of community life. Eliminating basic causes should be given priority over treating their undesirable effects. Often instead of helping men win higher wages we offer them plenty of bats and balls. Often also we allow bread and butter to become a substitute for an even more basic cultivation of spiritual values and ethical loyalties. A recognition of the principle of basic things first will often lead us outside the local community in an effort to deal with local problems. Local difficulties often stem from sources far removed from the neighborhood in which they appear. Unemployment may be due to conditions anywhere between home and the ends of the earth. An adequate neighborhood program requires action on a much wider front.

A second standard for selecting projects is that the most urgent should be given a higher priority claim. Some conditions, while undesirable, can remain relatively unchanged for some time to come without too serious effects; other situations are rapidly deteriorating. If the latter are to be dealt



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with at all, they must be handled soon. The beautification of the city's parks can conceivably wait; those dying from tuberculosis in the city's slums can be helped physically only by action taken before their death. Most suburban churches can without great distress postpone the installation of bowling alleys in the basement. In an atomic age the problem of bombs will not await our leisurely action.

In the third place, the problems most neglected by other agencies have a superior claim for consideration by the church. Popular projects already well supported by other agencies may require church sanction, but they do not require a large investment of church resources. It is where plentiful harvests are paired with a scarcity of laborers that the church can make its most effective contribution. Whenever another agency is prepared to take over a church-sponsored project, and to do it as well in all respects as the church has done, churchmen should not hesitate to make the transfer. That leaves their resources free for direction to another point of need which the conscience of the community as a whole has not yet been sensitive enough to feel. It is by such frontier action that the church implements the will of God in unaccustomed places and establishes his reign over ever more extensive areas.

One problem yet remains to be faced in the discussion of the process of discovering program through a church-community survey. When the responsible group has gathered and analyzed the data and has formulated germane recommendations, how may their findings be most fruitfully disseminated? Some leaders object to surveys because they are convinced that nothing ever comes of them. There is no point in expending time, money, and effort in scientific study unless such research contributes to the effective functioning of the



church. A stack of cards in a closet or a file of statistics in a forgotten drawer makes no contribution to the Kingdom of God. Gathering data is diagnostic; there still remains a therapeutic job to be done in helping people to recognize what is wrong and in planning a remedial program. How can the results of a study be presented in order to motivate to positive action?

As has been pointed out before, the larger the number of people who have participated in the making of the study, the greater the interest in its conclusions is likely to be. There are additional procedures, however, which contribute to the same end. The survey report should be written in attractive, readable style, or perhaps for general distribution a popular summary might be prepared of the more lengthy and detailed report available to those particularly interested. In either case such documents are competing with picture magazines and mystery movies. Survey reports must be accurate and must supply sufficient evidence to support their generalizations. They must also be lucid and interesting. Their content should be stated with clarity and precision. Facts must be presented in perspective, with emphasis on the woods rather than on the trees. The trite and the pedantic should be avoided. Whenever possible appealing concrete case material should be inserted. Throughout, the document ought to be related to the basic Christian concern of the congregation.

The text of a report can be illuminated by graphic aids. For example, a map can often clarify a point better than several pages of written material. Essential to any survey is a good base map, indicating the important features of the physical and social environment. In urban parishes a suitable map can usually be secured from a stationer, city engineer, election commissioner, planning commission, or Chamber of

Commerce. Maps of rural areas can often be obtained from the county clerk, highway department, or county surveyor. Useful forms of graphic presentations are land-use maps, zoning maps, spot maps of church membership, or social-resources maps which locate churches, schools, parks, and other social welfare aids.

Charts and graphs can also make otherwise dull material come to life. Many possibilities in bar charts, pie charts, belt graphs, pictographs, and line charts will occur to the ingenious reporter. Manuals in research method often include a fuller discussion of their use.<sup>7</sup> Several typical charts are valuable in church surveys. The "membership life line" can be used to indicate fluctuations in membership of the church and church school. The "financial life line" charts the amount contributed for local expenses and for benevolences, and perhaps the number of contributors.<sup>8</sup> The population pyramid is a useful device for visualizing the age and sex composition of the community and of the church membership.<sup>9</sup>

Pictures may also be used to illustrate a survey report. Snapshots may emphasize contrasting types of housing in the community or the history of the church plant. In the form of photo enlargements or slides such pictures also become available for popular presentation to larger audiences.

In every possible way congregational discussion of the survey results should be encouraged. In smaller communities a summary of the findings may be given publicity in the local newspaper. In any size community the church paper or Sun-

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Young, *op. cit.*, chap. 12; or W. C. Brinton, *Graphic Methods for Presenting Facts* (New York: Engineering Magazine Co., 1914).

<sup>8</sup> For a more complete discussion see Leiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-25; or Perry, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-33.

<sup>9</sup> See Leiffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-51; or Leiffer, *City and Church in Transition* (Chicago: Willett, Clark and Co., 1938), pp. 283-88.

day bulletin is available for excerpts. Congregational meetings or family-night dinners should consider the implications of the study. The church board and as many organized groups as possible should discuss the entire findings with special attention to those aspects which are most pertinent for their programs. Not only will such a process of group participation make action on survey recommendations more intelligent, but it will stimulate support for whatever policy is adopted. As a result of such widespread discussion each organization in the church and the congregation as a whole should adopt objectives which it intends to reach and which are in line with the revelations of the survey.

Acceptance of recommendations by the leaders of a congregation is not enough. A program built in that way may be disappointingly ineffectual. So long as only the leadership is committed to a project, the most that can be expected is that they may superimpose it on a supine but spiritless congregation. A church as a whole can become vitally functional only through *a progressive democratic discovery of its program in a continuing study of its situation.*

This definition of the most desirable procedure in program building involves at least three essential elements. In the first place, the program emerges from a serious study of the church, its immediate community, and its larger world environment. Activities are discovered in the situation reliably understood, rather than being promoted because of tradition or unrestrained imagination. This discovery, in the second place, is progressive. Situations do not remain static; their exploration must be equally dynamic. A single survey cannot produce a plan of action for all future decades. Only a continuous survey can remain accurate in dealing with changing churches and communities. Annual checking of a shorter,

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selected list of items will suggest trends and significant new factors. Repetition of a more exhaustive survey after an interval of several years is also called for, the length of the intervening interval depending on how rapidly conditions are changing in the particular church and community.

The third essential element in the ideal process of program building is that the discovery of needs and possibilities must be made by the people. Whatever initiative may be taken by the minister or the survey committee, recommendations do not become a program supported by the congregation until they have been adopted by the democratic decision of the group. Problems need to be faced as a total fellowship. A consciousness of need must spread to a wide circle of the membership. A full discussion of possible solutions ought to lead to a creative decision which is received with enthusiasm and substantial unanimity. Ideally the administrators do not make the plans. "Rather they help people to make their own plans by giving aid to the process of planning. The professional worker must know the questions rather than the answers. . . . The essence of good planning is participation."<sup>10</sup> So important is this principle and so widespread are its ramifications that further exploration in a separate chapter is called for.

<sup>10</sup> Harleigh B. Trecker, *Group Process in Administration* (New York: Woman's Press, 1946), pp. 71-72.

### CHAPTER III

## *THE ART OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP*

THE COMMUNITY-ACTION program of the church often fails because participation is largely confined to leaders in the higher echelons of command. An isolated handful of generals is somewhat less than adequate manpower for a major military campaign. A minister feverishly preaches, "Something ought to be done about alcohol," while his congregation merely lifts a sluggish eyebrow before settling back into undisturbed sleep. A church convention passes a resolution petitioning the national government to alter its foreign policy, but the sentiment of the resolution finds no support among the mass membership of the denomination. Because it registers no widespread agreement, the petition of the convention goes unheeded by the officials of the government. In other public organizations as well as in the church the tragic fact is that the analysis of experts very slowly and sometimes never wins its way into accepted usage. Leaders often lead only themselves. The gap between their thinking and the position of their followers is so glaringly great that whatever contribution they have to make is almost completely nullified.

This situation is a commentary on the lack of adequate leadership skills at a time when creative guidance is desperately needed by society. Effective leadership and nominal leadership are two different things. Too many persons are appointed to office, and nothing happens. Effective leadership exerts influence; it produces changes in attitudes and behavior. Leaders are those who see needs ahead of others, who



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can analyze and plan competently, whose suggestions carry conviction with the group, and whose spirit arouses enthusiastic devotion to the cause. By means of such does the Kingdom grow. Every minister, lay leader, or church-school teacher should be a competent leader in this sense of the term. As a matter of fact, every member of the church at one time or another on some issue ought to play a leadership role, making his acceptable contribution to the group. If the church is to become more thoroughly functional, projecting programs which transform communities, a more effective leadership must be developed. How can this be done?

A basic need is a proper conception of the leadership role. Many a leader in name has little influence in fact because he harbors a false notion of the most desirable type of guidance. He loses his case not because of any weakness in his position, but because of his own ineptitude in leading. Fortunately, enough sociological and psychological studies have been made in this area to make many such failures unnecessary. Recent research in group dynamics has indicated superior procedures for realizing the full possibilities of the group process.

Three types of leaders are commonly distinguished. One is the laissez-faire leader, who takes no initiative, but allows the group to go unguided on its own anarchical way, speaking only when his help is requested and then tending to reflect the position of his followers. At the opposite extreme is the autocratic leader, who places himself in status above the group, organizes their work in his own mind, and issues detailed directives and commands to his followers. A third type is the democratic leader, who functions as a participant alongside the other members of the group. The group makes its own decisions. The leader's only authority lies in the merit of his contributions; his only weapons are persuasion and example.

He suggests and inspires rather than orders and dominates.

The first, or laissez-faire, type of leadership can be quickly rejected. It involves a contradiction in terms. A leader is more than an inactive bystander; he should have a contribution to make and ought to make it effectively. He who sits on the fence with both ears to the ground is in a poor position to lead the hosts of the Lord to battle. The minister whose opinions reflect the majority vote on an informal Gallup poll of his congregation may experience length of days in his pulpit, but he will observe little growth in the pews. The real question lies in the choice between the other two types of leadership. Both are widely practiced within the church. Both are even written into the constitutional structure of various ecclesiastical bodies. Which of the two—autocratic or democratic leadership—is the most desirable?

Experiments carried on by Lewin, Lippitt, and White at the University of Iowa contribute a great deal to the answering of that question.<sup>1</sup> Boys' and girls' clubs of similar characteristics were observed under democratic and autocratic leadership; their reactions were carefully recorded and compared. The following results were apparent:

1. The children assumed more responsibility and initiative under democratic than under autocratic leadership. While both types of leaders took the initiative oftener than did the average group member, the difference was far greater for the autocratic leaders. Still more significant is the fact that, as time went on, autocratic leaders had to assume more and more

<sup>1</sup> For an account of these experiments see Kurt Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), chap. 5; or Ronald Lippitt and Ralph K. White, "An Experimental Study of Leadership and Group Life," in Theodore M. Newcomb, Eugene L. Hartley, *et al.*, *Readings in Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1947), pp. 315-30.

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of the responsibility. Group members tended to become restrained, unco-operative, and lifeless. On the other hand, the difference in amount of initiative between democratic leaders and members of their groups decreased with the passage of time. Group members tended to become co-operative, active, and self-reliant.

Even an omniscient and saintly autocrat impoverishes the group. Decisions made by experts may be wiser decisions, but they do not make the generality of men more competent. The primary function of the group leader is educational. It is not so much a matter of getting things done as it is of helping people grow. Leadership should be known by the personalities it enriches rather than by the followers it captivates and dominates. Such enrichment and growth take place more effectively in a democratic atmosphere. "The democratic leader draws people up to their best levels rather than driving them on in line with his own purposes. He trains persons to become leaders, to take his place, and even to surpass him."<sup>2</sup> This multiplication of the number of available leaders is an antidote both for those churches which complain of lack of leadership and for communities which have difficulty in securing participation in common projects. Membership in a democratic group is preparation for mature churchmanship and for responsible citizenship in a democracy.

2. Another statistically observable consequence in the experiment being described was more co-operation and less tension among group members under democratic leadership. Children in democratic groups were more friendly and co-operative. They more often praised each other and more frequently used the words "we," "our," and "us." Each

<sup>2</sup> Emory S. Bogardus, *Leaders and Leadership* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc., 1934), p. 22.

achieved status by working harder at the common project, yet each also showed a relatively greater individuality within a harmonious whole.

Members of the groups under autocratic leadership tended to become individualistic and self-centered. It was more difficult to get them to work together; each tried to exalt his own ideas and belittle those of others. Children became either subdued and repressed or aggressive and defiant, the usual reaction being submission toward the leader and as a compensation aggression toward one another. There were 185 expressions of hostility toward one another in the autocratic groups compared with only 5 in the democratic groups. Sometimes under autocratic leadership the entire group combined to vent its feelings on a single scapegoat until he stopped attending club meetings.

It would be too simple an explanation to say that all church quarrels are due to autocratic leadership. It seems to be experimentally established, however, that such domination does contribute to friction. Factionalism in the church may on occasion have this causal factor in common with anti-Semitism under Fascist dictatorship. The fraternal co-operation which ought to be characteristic of the Christian fellowship is nurtured most easily under democratic leadership.

3. A common argument in favor of autocratic leadership is frequently phrased, "Whatever else may be said against it, it really gets things done." If only the expert could tell us what to do, or if only the wise might rule—so the argument runs—all of us would act more efficiently, and a greater social product would result. The evidence, however, does not bear out this position. In the experiments being described children gave the barest submission necessary to autocratic leaders, but they also developed the habit of ignoring or avoiding their



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suggestions at every possible opportunity. This happened three times as often in the authoritarian as in the democratic atmosphere.

Furthermore the quality of work done was superior in the democratic groups, for the children were more careful, offered more suggestions for improvement, and left their share unfinished less often. In the autocratic atmosphere club members avoided as much work as possible, left early, or expressed their resentment by sabotage or by threats to strike.

Autocracy may seem to be the simplest, quickest, or most efficient procedure, but in the long run it has none of these advantages. Under emergency conditions, when the dike is breaking or enemy armies are at the gates, someone may need to issue orders. There is no alternative then to taking a chance that the commands may be unwise. If the emergency situation is not too long continued, the effects on the initiative of the people as a whole may not be too disastrous. Fortunately the activities of the church are usually not carried on under such emergency conditions. It is exceptional to have lightning strike the steeple or fire threaten a crowded auditorium. In the long-run situation in which the program of the church typically operates, democratic procedures result in more rapid progress, more accurate decisions, and more widespread support.

Experience in other areas points to the same conclusion. Neither the open domination of the party boss nor the veiled autocracy of the supersalesman bode much long-term good for society. Miracles of production have been wrought under joint labor-management committees which unilateral decisions by management alone were not able to effect.<sup>3</sup> We have

<sup>3</sup> For illustrations see Clinton S. Golden and Harold J. Ruttenberg, *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942).



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long been convinced that political democracies function more effectively than do totalitarian dictatorships. The same generalization must be increasingly applied to the life of the church.

This choice between types of ecclesiastical leadership has even wider implications than have yet been considered. As voluntary membership groups such as the church provide democratic experiences at the "grass roots," their members are better prepared to accept the responsibilities and opportunities of a democratic state. The citizen who is accustomed to question critically all statements made by leaders or members of a discussion group is less likely to become the prey of the demagogue or propagandist. The individual who has habitually participated in the lesser decisions of local groups is more likely to share effectively in determining the crucial policies that shape the national destiny. He is less likely to back away from complex questions or to let others do his thinking and make his decisions for him. The multiplicity of theories and plans which results from democratic participation is a rich resource for any society. Should the current policy fail, there are others in reserve to modify or supplant it. "A democratic society always has a second or a third string to its bow." <sup>4</sup>

Yet in spite of the fact that political democracy depends upon participation by its people, our devotion to this ideal on the local level is often "ritualistic rather than realistic." <sup>5</sup> Churchmen may swear by democracy in theory, but not having learned to use the tool in practice, they revert to autocratic procedures in their urge to "get things done." The con-

<sup>4</sup> Henry M. Busch, *Leadership in Group Work* (New York: Association Press, 1934), p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

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sequences threaten not only the church but also our free society. Goodwin Watson has wisely observed:

Youth, used to carrying out orders, are not intellectually or emotionally fit for democracy. The real danger to democracy does not stem from Mussolini, Hitler, Franco, Stalin, or any lesser dictator abroad. It arises from the American impulse to get results—never mind by what methods! Hence men and women who believe that democracy is worth saving daily set it aside.<sup>6</sup>

A decisive prophetic witness by the church in society now also depends upon more democratic procedures within the walls of the sanctuary. At first sight it would appear that the prophetic function is highly individualistic and dogmatic. Many would-be prophets consider their role amply performed when they have delivered themselves of a radical utterance or when they have participated in a top-level hierarchical pronouncement. This sort of procedure alone, however, will not produce a prophetic *church*. As has already been pointed out, our contemporary weakness is the absence of mass support for advanced positions. This will emerge most effectively out of widespread participation in group exploration. The role of the prophet is not completely discharged until he has paid the price of long, patient group discussion.

The proposals of experts may reflect valid ethical insight. All other experts may agree that they do. But such enlightened plans of ecclesiastical statesmen do not become actualized until they are freely adopted by their followers. Leaders holding advanced positions achieve more influence when they act democratically. Power *with* people is always superior

<sup>6</sup> *The Democratic Process* (Chicago: Board of Education of The Methodist Church), p. 7.

to power *over* people. The social-action program of the church needs nothing more now than an awakening of responsibility at the local congregational level. Only a participating people will be a concerned and active people. The prophetic impulse, which leads men to proclaim boldly an urgent call to action, is not contradicted by the concept of democratic leadership. Rather the democratic process is the procedure by which prophetic insight may permeate society.

It should not be necessary to point out that this procedure is also the type of leadership which is most nearly in accord with the Christian ethical standard. Respect for persons requires us to place others on the same status level as we do ourselves. Genuine personal humility contradicts domination or the desire for prestige. Christian love and brotherhood are best expressed in group solidarity among equals. The religious leader is not a salesman manipulating human drives or desires to "put over" his own program. Rather is he an educator who must be concerned about both the common good and universal participation, because he sees that the two are inseparable.

More precisely what is the function of the democratic leader? On the one hand he avoids autocratic domination. On the other hand he repudiates laissez-faire inactivity. The effective middle course has a threefold character. In the first place, the democratic leader stimulates others in the group to more active participation. His own intense interest and enthusiastic activity should awaken a similar reaction in those about him. His permissive attitude and sympathetic regard for others make it easier for them to venture a contribution. Raising questions rather than supplying answers demands an active response. Rephrasing contributions may suggest new insights. The best contribution of the leader lies not in his omniscient knowledge but in his skill in actualizing the potentialities of

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the group. As a spark from a storage battery may release all the latent horsepower of a gasoline engine, so an intriguing comment from a leader may ignite the fires of creativity in his followers.

This leads to the second aspect of the democratic leader's role. He supplies not only general stimulation but also specific suggestion. Ordinarily he does take the initiative oftener than do other members of the group. He is a generator of ideas, sufficiently detached in his view of the existing program of the group to remain creative, yet closely enough related to group activities that his ideas carry the ring of authenticity. This requires a generous measure of objectivity and emotional maturity. The opinions of the leader must not be colored by egoistic interest, nor must they be driven hither and yon by every wind that blows. They ought to relate immediate events to a sound basic philosophy. The finest democratic leader is characterized by a certain steadiness which gives proof of deep foundations. The breadth of his perspective can contribute to widening the horizons of his group, broadening their existing interests, and relating new concerns to old. Out of a background of wide experience he is able to act as a resource person, introducing pertinent information which can save his followers from awkward action and costly mistakes, and which can lead them more surely and rapidly to desired goals.

The fact that he has accumulated such resources is no cause for assuming an attitude of superiority. He who guides a party of mountain climbers is not necessarily a better man than his followers. He has simply been up this particular peak more often. Others in the party may do a better job of guiding the group up other peaks. This involves what S. R. Slavson

calls "reciprocal leadership."<sup>7</sup> Every democratic leader on occasion also becomes a follower of another member of the group. He does not exercise a continuous initiative. Rather he practices "the principle of alternate assertiveness and withdrawal."<sup>8</sup> When the resources of the group are spent, he stimulates its members by fresh suggestions. Then he withdraws in favor of other members until such time as his initiative again seems desirable.

A third function of the leader may be that of the supervisor or executive. If he is elected to a position of responsibility, he puts into effect the decisions of the group. He may propose but he does not determine basic policy. In day-to-day detailed decisions he is governed by the action of the group. This is often difficult to do because of the leader's intense interest in the project. He may often feel that his own insights alone can keep the entire matter from collapsing. He is tempted then to become the type of administrator whose subordinates become only advisors at best and lackeys at worst. Policy is unilaterally determined by the "boss"; all manners of details must cross his desk for executive approval; no significant decision can be made without consulting the "front office." Other administrators act as the presiding officer over a group discussion process in which policy is determined by majority vote. Within the framework of this policy subordinate leaders are given free rein to exercise initiative and make day-to-day decisions. The executive officer acts as the co-ordinator of the contributions of others in the group. Of these two types of administrators the second will be thrice blessed, for he has learned the secret of the democratic process.

<sup>7</sup> *Creative Group Education* (New York: Association Press, 1937), p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.



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He knows that the essence of good administration is participation.

Even those intellectually committed to such a democratic process find it easy to slip into autocratic practices unawares. Remnants of an unregenerate love of power still cling to most of us; we enjoy basking on loftier levels of superiority in the sunlight of popular adulation. Inferiority feelings easily betray many of us into compensatory reactions which strain the democratic pattern. Several exceedingly common undemocratic practices can be listed in the hope that a discussion of them may serve to warn leaders against their inconspicuous snares.

One common denial of democracy is domination by force of prestige. "Pulling one's rank" occurs in civilian as well as in military circles. Adult counselors to youth groups frequently awe the membership into silence by appealing to the prerogatives of age. Dogmatic statements by a large contributor, an elder statesman, or a new minister may effectively terminate all discussion. A leader's influence may well have been earned by the cogency of his previous suggestions, but even prestige so acquired should not be allowed to short-circuit the process of full participation by all members of the group.

Paternalism by the well-intentioned expert is no more democratic than dictatorship by an ignorant knave. Even though the leader may know what is good for the group, it is still not in the best interests of the group that he make decisions for them. Rule by the wise and the good, even if it could be successfully guaranteed, is still not democratic. When an industrialist decides singlehandedly how his workers shall use their wages by building a company gymnasium instead of giving them a raise in wages, he may be contributing to the

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health of his employees, but he is not helping them to achieve moral maturity by their learning themselves how to spend their incomes wisely. In the same way unilateral decisions by religious leadership may (or may not) lead to wise policies, but they do not cultivate participation or leadership ability. Eduard C. Lindeman once observed:

The Community Leader's greatest temptation is to "do" things for the community, rather than create the means whereby the community may do things for itself. . . . Each time the leader does something for the community that the community might have done for itself, he prevents the community from developing its own resources. This process in time becomes so devitalizing that whole communities appear to be without leadership.<sup>9</sup>

The temptation to paternalistic interference becomes especially strong when the group is about to do something which the leader considers to be a serious mistake. There may be occasions when the democratic process itself requires invoking the established policy of the denomination or other larger body to prevent contradictory action by a local congregational unit. Democracy is no more anarchy than it is autocracy. Local groups cannot violate at will the democratic decision of the larger whole. Except for such cases, however, mature adult groups have a right to make their own mistakes. Not only is this a requirement of democracy; it is also a necessary basis for the most rapid progress, for only in this way can groups learn most effectively, develop the soundest initiative, and cultivate the most active participation.

Another common denial of democracy is the submission of detailed plans from the top down before the group has formulated guiding principles. Even when such action is not accom-

<sup>9</sup> *The Community* (New York: Association Press, 1921), pp. 190-91.

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panied by a "take it or leave it" attitude, it ordinarily has inhibiting consequences. To submit, for example, a detailed syllabus for a conference on community housing before the congregation has decided that there is need for such a conference will at best discourage creative discussion, and at worst it may incite rebellion by the group. In the quiet of one's study it seems easy to draw up such a minutely outlined plan, but such a procedure may not be the most effective way of completing the project. Except under unusual emergency circumstances the time for detailed planning is after, not before, the adoption of general policy by the group.

Perhaps the most prevalent and often unconscious reversion to autocracy is manipulation of the machinery of democracy to secure one's ends. "Pulling the wires" to prevent a genuine expression of group sentiment is an insidious perversion of the democratic process. It is an attractive but dangerous temptation so to rig the situation that one's own point of view will win out. Shortsighted leaders may bring a matter to a vote at a meeting from which the chief opponents are absent. One may restrict a committee to those known to favor one's own proposal. Or the nominating committee may be persuaded to replace members of the executive board who have been critical of one's policies. It is difficult to see how such a building up of a personal political machine differs in essence from some of the unsavory practices of political bosses. Both use the machinery of democracy to achieve personal ends rather than to express group opinion. Such a procedure is tinged, however slightly, with totalitarianism. It is a type of autocracy only thinly disguised with a veneer of diplomacy, finesse, and even kindness. While the end sought may seem to justify the means in the short run, in the long run it saps the creative energy of the group.

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Still another common perversion of democratic procedure is the use of propaganda, in the unworthy sense of that term. One illustration is short-circuiting the process of rational discussion by tenuously related emotional appeals. "Mother," "the founders of the church," or other feeling-charged symbols may have a place in motivating well-considered action; but they are dangerous devices when used to stampede decision without adequate consideration of the evidence. Such devices are part of the stock in trade of the demagogue. Another perilous procedure is "card stacking," or piling up all the arguments on one side of an issue while glossing over or seeking to suppress opposition points. This may become a species of deception. The advocate of a cause, like a trial lawyer, is often tempted to produce only partial facts while discouraging a full inquiry into the subject. The true devotee of democracy is as eager to have his opponent's case presented as he is to formulate his own, for he knows that sound conclusions can emerge only from a full consideration of all relevant data.

If he is to avoid such pitfalls, what suggestions may be made to the leader who wishes to move democratically? For one thing he must recognize the necessity of earning his right to be heard. He cannot assume leadership solely by virtue of his office, his training, or his previous successes elsewhere. He must win acceptance in the group by becoming a worthy participant in its current activities. "A newcomer who immediately opens an advice bureau is destined for a fall."<sup>10</sup> Before suggesting radical renovations a newcomer had best serve a period of apprenticeship, not only to make sure that he understands the situation correctly, but also to establish himself as a group member. Before such acceptance has taken place, he may assert

<sup>10</sup> Edmund de S. Brunner, *Community Organization and Adult Education* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 36.



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his authority and gain a grudging acquiescence. It is only after he has demonstrated his loyalty, understanding, and genuine interest that he can stimulate basic change through bona fide group action.

Bishop McConnell out of a lifetime of experience illustrates this with two cases, one a bit extraordinary, the other more typical.

The . . . unusual case was that of a pastor in a fishing village. One morning the dawn showed a fishing boat just off shore fighting a terrific storm. Its prow was fast in the sand, and the boat was in danger of being broken up. The fisherman on shore manned a rowboat and the members of the volunteer crew took their places. As the boat was about to push off one oarsman "turned yellow," scrambled out and ran for dear life. Instantly the pastor of the village church climbed into the vacant place, pulled an oar to the endangered vessel, helped save the men. The next Sunday morning the pastor preached to a crowded house of fishermen, and it was so always after that. The pastor was thereafter an authority on everything. . . .

Not many preachers are ever called on to serve in such extreme and spectacular fashion. In an ecclesiastical area with which I was for a time connected there was a pastor of a church in a mining district. He gave himself to a study of the miners' problem—of all sorts of problems. The result was that the miners and the members of their families came to him with their difficulties, and the pastor came to be, humanly speaking, the most effective personal force during a period of about fifteen years through all that mining district.<sup>11</sup>

Indigenous leadership can do more to transform institutions and communities than can imported leaders. Gardner H.

<sup>11</sup> "Inside My Neighbor's World," *Christian Century*, October 19, 1949, p. 1232. Used by permission.



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Shaw in an address to the New York State Conference of Social Work said:

There is nothing in our past or present experience which suggests that we outsiders can effectively organize . . . a community to which we do not now and have never belonged. And should a time ever come when it is possible to effect such an organization, then the character of American life will have so radically changed as to have ceased to be American. In a large measure it will have become totalitarian.<sup>12</sup>

Numerous experiments in community organization have come to grief because outside leadership was imported and tried to suggest basic changes in the community pattern of living without first cultivating friendship, discovering the interests and frustrations of the people, and winning the confident trust of the community. It was for this reason that Jean and Jess Ogden, moving in to aid the development of Greene County under the extension division of the University of Virginia, first took up summer residence in the community. They visited many homes. "They struck up acquaintance with many of the mountain people, learned to 'get their settin' done' along with the folk who came to the villages on Saturday afternoon to 'set a spell' and sometimes talk."<sup>13</sup> In the church, as in any other institution, leadership by self-appointment or ecclesiastical designation must likewise first win confirmation of the nomination in the attitudes of the people.

Another prerequisite to effective leadership is a genuine democratic attitude on the part of the leader. The Quakers

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Saul D. Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Wayland J. Hayes, *The Small Community Looks Ahead* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1947), p. 157.

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sometimes express this by speaking of the "level look" which glances neither up nor down, but places every man on the same plane of worth. A real appreciation of people and a genuine respect for the views of others are essential to the democratic process. The leader must have faith enough to believe that the essential insights of life are within the reach of the average man and that the group can be trusted to give general direction to its program. The leader's relationship is not that of a commander to his troops or of a ruler to his subjects, but rather that of one participant to another on the same status level.

This demands a humility which is often foreign to the intellectual. We too must see ourselves and our opinions as constantly under the judgment of God, and we must cultivate the habit of listening willingly and eagerly to the insights of others. Not too many of us share the spirit of Emerson when he said, "Every man I meet is my superior in some respect." Rather we are likely to compensate for our own insecurity by assuming an inward attitude of superiority. In spite of our words to the contrary our real attitude is sometimes betrayed in an expression, a gesture, or an inflection. We do well to check our own motivations and attitudes rigorously lest we act because of a craving for recognition or authority instead of in response to a genuine regard for the welfare and dignity of men.

Genuine love for the members of the group will make the leader more sensitive to their reactions. He must learn to put himself into the mental world of others to understand why they think, speak, and act as they do. Not only must he listen eagerly to what members of the group are saying, but he must be sensitive to the meaning of their behavior. What does it mean that they come, or do not come, to meetings? What is

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the significance of their participation, or nonparticipation, in certain activities? The leader must hear the silences as well as the sounds of those about him, and he must be willing to learn from them.

Closely related is the necessity of cultivating a strong group consciousness. Actions should not be singledhanded but rather a conscious product of group life. It takes more than a collection of able people to become a creative group. Every leader and every member of the group should be able to say sincerely and with emphasis "we" and "our" instead of "I" and "my." This requires the church to move substantially as a group because of common conviction and consent. While this may mean moving somewhat more slowly on issues on which it is difficult to obtain a consensus of opinion, it also insures that action when taken is more permanent and more powerfully supported by the people. More important than a program which is immediately correct is a body of people who are capable of functioning properly in the long run. Every leader must on occasion learn "to labor and to wait."

The cultivation of group consciousness also demands as a general principle that the leader avoid self-advertisement. To take personal credit for group achievement is a constant temptation, especially when it may aid ecclesiastical advancement. Focusing the spotlight on the leader to the exclusion of the group is both dishonest and dangerous. It is dishonest, for group accomplishments are never possible without the group. To claim sole credit for the leader is a lie. The symphony condutor may bow in response to applause, but he acknowledges the reality of the situation when he calls the orchestra to its feet to share in the acclaim. Too great a prominence given to individuals is also dangerous because it may lead to an adverse reaction from the immediate group and from the general

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community. As Lindeman has pointed out, "Personal advertising results in diminishing returns from leadership."<sup>14</sup> Assumed arrogance is often preliminary to popular rebellion. Many a project has failed because leaders could not be self-effacing but instead demanded their full share of the credit, thereby antagonizing other potential supporters. In community action as well as on the athletic field it is teamwork rather than isolated starring that scores the goals.

Group consciousness of the sort being described ought to become normal in the Christian church. Fellowship is inherent in the ideal of Christian love. Basic commitment to a common quest constitutes a powerful "tie that binds." Religious groups above all others ought to be characterized by shared activities and harmonious co-operation. Unity of spirit can be maintained even when it is not possible to achieve unanimity of conviction.

The democratic leader will do everything possible to encourage participation by each member of the group. Instead of discouraging contributions by dominating the situation himself, he must be determined "to help others express themselves even when they have nothing to say. Every member of the democracy must have something to say."<sup>15</sup> The leader must often restrain his own ubiquitous verbosity in order not to inhibit the tentative formulations of others. He must also demonstrate a readiness to receive criticism without reacting defensively or breaking fellowship with critics. Discussion procedures instead of lectures ought to play a prominent part in the total church program. The leader should accept the obligation of adequate training in the techniques of discussion

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>15</sup> J. K. Hart, *Community Organization* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920), p. 152.



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leadership.<sup>16</sup> The first suggestions made by a group unaccustomed to democratic planning may be superficial and conventional, but as they become more experienced in the process—and as they see their suggestions followed—they are likely to become more vocal and more profound. Praise for even immature contributions made will encourage a repetition of the participation. Inordinate faultfinding may be only an unconscious attempt to cover one's own sense of guilt arising from a feeling of ineffectuality in leadership. Jesus constantly saw the best possibilities in others; and because he did, they often measured up to his expectations.

Nurturing participation also involves developing in the group an understanding of the group process. Democratic procedures must be learned; the appropriate attitudes must be cultivated. If creative interaction is to take place, there must be a fertile intercommunication of interests and viewpoints which leads beyond compromise to a creative integration. This requires mutual appreciation of divergent opinions and an eagerness to learn from those who disagree with us. If the most adequate consensus is to emerge, each person in the group must accept the obligation of sharing his current views freely, fully, and frankly, but also in humility and love. Each member of the group is an indispensable collaborator. Others have an obligation to understand before they criticize. The atmosphere is not that of a debate in which each participant clubs each other debater over the head with tenaciously held convictions. This is rather a co-operative search for truth in which each sharer feels that he has "won" when he discovers a superior insight and thereby alters a former opinion. The aim is not to exhort and convince but rather to discuss and evaluate.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, H. S. Elliott, *The Process of Group Thinking* (New York: Association Press, 1928).



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Conclusions in which one holds a proprietary interest are to be tested critically. Others' views are to be regarded appreciatively. Such objectivity is the beginning of collective wisdom.

Repeatedly the process should be lifted beyond the human participants to the level of God. E. Stanley Jones once wrote, "In our church committees we generally debate rather than meditate, we talk to each other rather than listen to God, we make decisions by the majority vote rather than by the Master's voice heard in the silences."<sup>17</sup> As each individual recalls constantly this larger frame of reference for his thinking, and as the group pauses occasionally for worshipful seeking, the total procedure may be elevated above human bickerings to an authentic religious experience of brotherhood. The reality of divine fellowship is a distinctive resource of the church.

As the leader encourages common participation, he is also developing new leadership. Instead of being jealous of such competition or insisting upon doing all the work with his own "superior" hand, the wise leader will welcome the emergence of a substitute to replace himself and thus to free himself for service at some point previously neglected. "The less he is indispensable, the greater he is as a leader."<sup>18</sup> If an organization or a community is to be democratic, its leadership must be widely distributed. Lindeman speaks of "the diminishing returns of overworked leadership" and then adds, "We lack leadership because we lack faith in the so-called common man."<sup>19</sup> The practice of the democratic ideal leads us to discover many possibilities for leadership previously overlooked.

Outstanding church and community leaders may be de-

<sup>17</sup> "How Does God Guide Us?" *Christian Advocate*, November 9, 1944, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Sanderson and Polson, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 114-15.

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veloped from inconspicuous mechanics, housewives, or clerks. A striking personality or a prominent position is not a prerequisite for leadership, as many churches, labor unions, and other "grass roots" organizations have demonstrated. There are potential leaders in every community, even though the common complaint may have been that "this community lacks leadership." Leadership can be developed. It is first necessary to arouse a consciousness of need, an interest in a project, thus stimulating the desire to lead. Then leadership training becomes possible both formally through classes, counseling, or printed materials, and informally through supervised service in smaller but ever-growing responsibilities. Participation may release dormant powers in previously obscure persons. Leadership is multiplied and progress accelerated.

The basic spirit of the most creative leader compounds an outreach of love to those about him with selfless devotion to a cause beyond him. Long ago Laotzu saw this when he said:

A leader is best  
When people barely know that he exists,  
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,  
Worst when they despise him.  
"Fail to honor people,  
They fail to honor you";  
But of a good leader, who talks little,  
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,  
They will all say, "We did this ourselves." <sup>20</sup>

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matt. 16:25 R.S.V.)

<sup>20</sup> *The Way of Life According to Laotzu*, tr. Witter Bynner (New York: John Day Co., Inc., 1944), pp. 34-35. Copyright, 1944, by Witter Bynner.

## CHAPTER IV

### MEETING OPPOSITION CREATIVELY

NO SOCIAL progress is possible without controversy. No improvement is ever adopted without first facing trial by opposition. As Arnold J. Toynbee has recently pointed out, "All acts of social creation are the work either of individual creators or, at most, of creative minorities; and at each successive advance the great majority of the members of the society are left behind."<sup>1</sup> Conforming majorities do not ordinarily deal kindly with innovating minorities. He who advocates a better way of life can be sure of a measure of difficulty and pain. If a leader is not facing some opposition, he had better re-examine his position lest he be failing to make a creative contribution because he is not espousing some well-chosen minority position. Progress never comes without suffering. If it seems to do so, it is because of the noble company of martyrs in previous generations. If we suffer without noticeable progress, we may be preparing the way for future advance.

Conflict is inevitable in moving toward a better society, and the more basic the change proposed, the more intense the conflict is likely to be. For numerous reasons those liberals who want progress without tension are doomed to disappointment. The complexity of modern issues and the fact that consequences of each of the numerous possible alternative solutions

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of History*, abridgment by D. C. Somervell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 214.

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cannot be neatly demonstrated in a laboratory make sincere differences of opinion almost inevitable. The inertia of custom also imposes a tenacious resistance to change. The folkways have a coercive power; even the best among us feel a stern pressure toward social conformity. We feel uncomfortable if the elbows of our coats are rubbed to a shine and if our shoes are not, even though we know that there is no reasonable basis for the distinction. We become even a more serious species of outcast if we hold radical ideas in a conservative environment.

The complacencies of precedent are not easily shattered. In one small community, part of the high-school classes were held on the upper floor and the grammar-school classes on the lower floor of a wooden building. Every forty minutes the children downstairs had to stop work while the high-school students changed classes. It took ten years to secure the rather obviously needed reversal of floors, and one school principal lost his position "because the local people thought it would be a demotion for those who had earned their right to 'go up' to come down." <sup>2</sup>

Tradition often becomes even more invincible because of the defenses erected by vested interests. Those who profit from any *status quo* ordinarily fight vigorously for its perpetuation. When fundamental alterations are suggested in long established privileges, all the customary beneficiaries are likely to draw up their heaviest artillery. Earnest reformers and sincere churchmen have often been the victims of these defenders of an ancient but outmoded faith.

The conflict which for these several reasons inevitably follows the introduction of a new idea may be highly creative. Out of the resulting interaction of forces and the interchange

<sup>2</sup> Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

of ideas may emerge a new and improved pattern for the common life. Disagreement may also, however, be disruptive. It may distort judgments, split the community, break up organizations, and retard progress because each contender is entrenched even more firmly in his previous position.

Whether conflict will be creative or disruptive depends upon how wisely it is handled. What suggestions can be made for minimizing opposition and for keeping creative such controversy as is necessary? The answer to that question is especially important for the ministry and for other leaders who are religiously motivated. In an imperfect society it is the duty of religious idealists to point insistently to a higher goal. They share the prophetic urgency described by Jeremiah when he said, "His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:9). Yet because of their ineptitude leaders so inspired have often retarded rather than advanced their cause. Kirsopp Lake once remarked, "A church composed entirely of priests would die of inanition; one composed entirely of prophets would die of convulsions." To avoid ignominious innocuousness we must be prophetic. How can we be prophetic without fatal convulsions? Several suggestions may be helpful.

1. The democratic process discussed in the preceding chapter can make a basic contribution to the solution of this dilemma. Democracy in procedure involves not the monopolistic presentation of a single point of view, but rather group exploration of various possible alternatives. The consensus which arises out of such a process is both sounder and more firmly held than the more superficial acceptance of the pronouncements of a pulpit "two feet above contradiction." The church will actually move more rapidly in a prophetic direc-



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tion as progressive leaders spend less time in "getting something off their chests" and more time in encouraging creative group discussion through which the mass membership will move to more advanced common convictions.

To participate in such a creative process the ecclesiastical leader must genuinely conduct himself as a member of a group of seekers. Proper humility before God requires him to recognize that his present convictions are not the final revelation of complete truth. He will give up the idea that the protection of his own prestige requires immunity from criticism. He will restrain himself from enjoying the exhilaration of profligate denunciation. He will genuinely respect his opponents, which means more than treating them graciously and fairly. It means also that he will expect to learn from them as they learn from him. By and large, disagreeing churchmen are sincerely acting according to the best they know. One ought not therefore demand abject surrender from opponents. Such an ultimatum is likely only to intensify their belligerence. One ought rather to recognize their claim to status as participants in joint exploration.

This does not mean that church leaders should become mealy-mouthed and hesitant purveyors of cautious and tentative generalities. Even while remaining open to new light, one has the obligation of stating his present position as cogently and forcefully as possible. The group process demands such full and frank participation. One ought to do prophetic preaching, but he ought to consider it as his contribution to a process of group discussion to be openly criticized by his hearers and to be matched by their counterstatements.

One must therefore give his opponents the same right to speak which he claims for himself. Neither the pacifist clergyman nor the minister who would participate in war has a right

to demand that all speakers from his pulpit hold his point of view. On any issue the congregation ought to hear a presentation of all the positions held by any important section of the Christian fellowship. Just as laymen should be large-minded enough to support a sincere minister even when they disagree with him, so the minister should be willing to do as much whenever the situation is reversed. Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote, "A pulpit which thunders maledictions upon the pew without offering some opportunities for rejoinders is bound ultimately to meet the fate of all tyrannies; for it establishes a spiritual tyranny."<sup>3</sup> Whenever the pulpit or the pew demands a monopoly of expression, it shows a lack of confidence in its own cause. A point of view is not to be trusted if it cannot withstand criticism. Furthermore, so long as a congregation is insulated from opposing arguments, it never becomes sufficiently prepared to meet them, and it may later be carried away by the first contrary wind that blows. Stalwart men of conviction are developed only after exposure to a variety of points of view.

Closely related is the desirability of frequent face-to-face conversation. Pulpit pyrotechnics and ex cathedra utterances are ordinarily not as effective as discussion groups or private conferences. Particularly ought one try to confer with his individual opponents directly and whenever feasible in advance of public discussion. It is good strategy if possible to get the opposition on your side before the struggle begins. A representative of another point of view on the committee preparing a statement may eliminate much needless debate later. It is more difficult to disagree face to face than it is at a distance. David D. Vaughan used to tell his theological students, "A clergyman

<sup>3</sup> "The Radical Minister and His Church," *Radical Religion*, Winter, 1936, p. 26.

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should not do his pastoral work in the pulpit." When only a few individuals are involved, one ought not say in public what should be discussed in private. An experienced businessman once gave this advice. "Concerning things that are pleasant, write. Concerning things that are difficult, confer!"<sup>4</sup> It requires more courage to talk to a man to his face than it does to type a letter in one's study or to throw down a barrage from behind a pulpit, but personal conference is likely to be more effective, especially when one exhibits an attitude of steady good will.

In so far as it is possible, the minister ought to maintain a ministry to all men. If he "hobs" with one side in a dispute, he ought to "nob" with the other. While he is obligated to come to ethical judgments which may favor one side more than the other, his friendship should be impartially available to all who will accept it. Jesus associated with all sorts and conditions of men—publicans, sinners, Simon the Pharisee, and Peter the fisherman.

2. The wise leader will help his congregation to come to an appreciation of the procedures of democratic, prophetic churchmanship. By frequent reference and wise example the people may be led to become increasingly articulate in their loyalty to freedom of speech, objective inquiry, and tolerance of divergent viewpoints. They may come to consider it normal to hear a defense of an opinion which they do not accept, and they can come to a fuller understanding of the desirability of disagreement in fellowship. Worshipers should expect a frank discussion from their minister and should wish him to give complete expression to his sincere convictions.

In the reality of Christian fellowship the church has available

<sup>4</sup> Palmer, McCulloch, and Lane, "Labor Troubles and the Local Church," *Social Action*, January 15, 1939, p. 32.

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a resource which should make possible difference without dissension. Common loyalties to God and to the way of Jesus are more basic than any surface disagreement. Because "we are members one of another," we can "speak . . . truth each one with his neighbor" (Eph. 4:25 A.S.V.). Though their gifts and opinions may be diverse, "all the members of the body, being many, are one body." The conservative cannot say to the liberal, "I have no need of thee," nor can the Christian socialist say to the Christian capitalist, "I have no need of thee." "Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon those we bestow more abundant honor; . . . that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (I Cor. 12:12, 22-23, 25 A.S.V.).

The bonds of Christian fellowship can grow stronger through cultivation. Common experiences of worship, study, recreation, and work bind a congregation together in understanding and love. After men have painted the church together, they are less likely to object to one another's social views. When the heads of a congregation bow together in meaningful prayer, unity in humble search for God's truth becomes more of a reality.

A congregation can also be brought to a better understanding of their common responsibility for an adventurous Christian witness. As they understand the Christian faith aright, they will see that the church must always challenge prevailing practices and that it will frequently come into conflict with powerful forces in the community. Being committed to such a purpose, the congregation will not be thrown into a panic by rumors falsely circulated about the minister, nor will the governing board alter policy when pledges are cancelled by



those who with strings attached to their gifts would manipulate the witness of the church. They will think it better to worship in a modest building which they can afford to own rather than to build a vast temple the payments on which leave them at the mercy of any sizable group which threatens to withdraw its support. For the congregation that understands its function, allegiance to basic principles is more important than community pressures.

3. No matter how advanced or retarded the congregation or the citizens of the community may be, a leader must always begin where the people are. While he does not end there, he must begin there. In a familiar story the man who was asked how to get to Jonesville made several attempts at giving complex directions and then said, "Well, I'll tell you; if I were going to Jonesville, I wouldn't start from here." We *must* start from here. There is no alternative route to the Kingdom of God. One must discover the attitudes and traditions and prejudices of a group, and in his first utterances he must take them into account. The new must be related to what the group already believes and feels.

The problem of communication is always a difficult one. The possibility of misunderstanding becomes even greater when unfamiliar or controversial ideals are being dealt with. To convey thought words must be chosen because of their meaning to the hearer rather than to the speaker. Otherwise the modern preacher "will be speaking into the air" just as surely as those who once spoke in strange tongues. As Paul said, "If I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me" (I Cor. 14:9, 11 R.S.V.). Too many sermons are preached with one eye on possible publication in the *Pulpit* or on the likes and dislikes of the pulpit supply committee of First



Church, Megopolis. If more preaching and program planning were done with both eyes on the background, needs, and attitudes of the immediate congregation and community, there would be considerably less turmoil and more creative progress.

One also needs to try to understand and to deal with the dynamics of personality of individuals with whom he deals. At this point clinical psychology can often come to the aid of the social reformer. Psychological factors such as inner conflicts or inferiority feelings color the reactions of members of the group even as they do of the leader. Insight into such reactions contributes not only to a more effective communication, but also to a more sympathetic attitude toward possible opponents.

Furthermore it must be recognized that there are some ideas for which the average group is not yet ready. Since the minister did not come to his present convictions through a single sermon, the congregation can scarcely be expected to do so. It is not surprising that a community does not immediately see the need for a change which a political scientist of long training and wide experience may prescribe. It is possible to try to move too fast. As Rollin Walker once put it in his colorful way, one can heat the incubator too hot and get a hard-boiled egg instead of a chick—or, to change the figure, one can get a dreadful case of intellectual sunburn by too big a dose at one sitting.

Stubbornness is sometimes confused with integrity or piety. To modify one's pace in order to take one step at a time with his people is more to be desired than an attempted leap which carries no one to the goal. Even Jesus is reported to have said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Paul also confessed, "I fed

you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it" (I Cor. 3:2 A.S.V.).

Yet neither Jesus nor Paul echoed prevailing prejudices. There is always danger that one adapt to prevailing interests to such an extent as merely to duplicate them. Recognizing that an educational process must move slowly, some have not moved at all. Some churches or communities are ready for stronger meat than others. Some groups, such as the young people, may be ready to move more rapidly than others in the same church. Timing is important. When a need is deeply felt, as during an epidemic or war, a society may adopt innovations more quickly. Certainly one ought to suggest all that the traffic will bear, leading as many people as far as possible in as short a time as possible.

4. As much as in him lies, the religious leader will make his own personal characteristics a help rather than a hindrance. His habits ought to provide no occasion for stumbling. Paul was wise to conclude, "If meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore" (I Cor. 8:13 A.S.V.). A leader may feel that there is nothing immoral about certain activities, but if they are of minor consequence in comparison with his major task, he is wise to put them aside if they would constitute a barrier between him and his people.

A person ahead of his time needs to be especially sensitive to his own faults lest objection to them may lead to opposition to the cause he represents. After forty minutes of preaching the minister may consider his listeners spellbound when actually they are paralyzed. One needs objectively and vigorously to evaluate his attitudes, practices, and motives. Is he acting in response to altruistic interest or because he craves prominence? Has he eliminated his own resentments, fears, and hostilities lest they lead him to neurotic reactions to other

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people's ideas? Some prophets have been persecuted not for their intellectual position, but rather because of their personality difficulties. Henry Hitt Crane, who is himself an excellent illustration of the creative prophet, once warned:

A disgruntled temperament, a subtly soured spirit, an antagonistic attitude, a gratuitous belligerency, a spiritual insensitiveness, an egregious egotism, an arrogant dogmatism, a condescending omniscience—any of these unfortunate characteristics may so distort and twist the meaning of the truth that its utterance will alienate the hearer altogether. It always takes two techniques to tell the truth. The easiest part is saying your say; the hardest part is preparing the mind of your auditor to hear what you actually say rather than what he thinks you say when he sees your manner, senses your attitude, or divines your spirit.<sup>5</sup>

It is the obligation of the minister, as of every other creative person, to develop as winsome a personality as possible. His should be a genius for friendship, rooted in a genuine and deep love of people. If one loves his people hard enough, he is less likely to antagonize them, and they are less likely to attack him. Pastoral work and the expression of brotherly concern in the great crises of life gain added importance at this point. Preachers with a prophetic message probably need to do more pastoral work than their brethren with a more meager gospel. Sincerity, perspective, friendliness, a sense of humor, humility, sensitivity to the feelings of others—all these are among the qualities to be prized highly by the men with a vital message. Timothy was well advised, "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing,

<sup>5</sup> "Preaching Unpopular Truth," in *The Minister and Human Relations*, ed. William K. Anderson (Nashville: Methodist Commission on Courses of Study, 1943), p. 94.

correcting his opponents with gentleness" (II Tim. 2:24-25 R.S.V.).

It is through his continued association in the varied activities of the group that the community comes to know and appreciate the high qualities of a leader. Any newcomer must win his place in any group. It takes time to develop full confidence. A minister can often take positions after ten years in a community which would have led to his immediate expulsion during his first few weeks there. His ideas will be given more serious consideration after he becomes known as a person worthy of friendship and trust.

There is no substitute for an active devotional life to temper one's spirit for the tensions of creative conflict. As one seeks to immerse his life in the spirit of Jesus, he is more likely to exhibit the characteristics necessary to creative leadership. E. P. Ryland, who was a greatly beloved pastor even while he stood in the forefront of many a social battle, once testified that he never retired at night without reading a chapter or a part of a chapter from the words of Jesus and from *The Imitation of Christ*. These constituted his invariable "nightcap." Walter Rauschenbusch, Kirby Page, and numerous others have illustrated the same happy combination of a deeply devotional spirit and a strong social passion, each reinforcing the other.

5. The person of divergent convictions does well to emphasize also such points of agreement as exist between him and his community. If he opens his mouth only to express those of his sentiments which are most obnoxious to his hearers, he ought not be surprised to be called a "crackpot." Unless one expresses his full set of convictions, including the sweet with the bitter, he is actually misrepresenting himself. Prophets have often assumed that of course their audiences

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will realize that they also believe in many of the worthy traditions accepted by the group. Why should audiences recognize anything of the sort unless the speaker articulates his assumptions? If one expects to attack American imperialism, he had better also express such appreciation as he feels for American foreign policy. It is always well to begin on common ground, as Paul did on Mars Hill, with a principle or idea already accepted by the group. Most notions include some good elements along with the bad. It is simple honesty as well as good strategy, therefore, to be appreciative as well as critical, to pat an idea on the back at the same time one is kicking it in the shins.

Certainly religious leaders should always keep clear the Christian basis for their conclusions. Halford E. Luccock in criticizing the preaching of one young enthusiast wisely said, "Undigested chunks of Karl Marx and Scott Nearing, garnished with an occasional page of the *Nation* or *New Republic*, hardly come under the head of Christian preaching."<sup>6</sup> Our traditional Christian resources are too valuable to neglect. If one validly relates his convictions to the social teachings of the prophets or Jesus, any objector must move to repeal the Bible before he can make a motion to excommunicate the preacher.

Another implication of the same principle is that the wise leader will always advocate a balanced program. He who rides a hobby deserves to be criticized for neglecting other essential areas. A balanced diet in religion includes comfort as well as challenge. The whole gospel involves personal evangelism as well as social action. The children of the neighborhood may need better teachers as well as new swimming pools. The

<sup>6</sup> *Christian Faith and Economic Change* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1936), p. 132.



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interests of the minister and the concerns of the church should be as wide as the needs of human life.

A person of such inclusive interests will feel it important that in action as well as words he do a worthy job on fundamental noncontroversial matters. If a minister makes a conspicuous success of other parts of his job, he is less likely to be taken to task for advanced social ideas. So long as church attendance is increasing and the total program is flourishing, there will be fewer repercussions when he speaks at a labor-union convention. Many a parson has attributed his dismissal to the radical content of his sermons when a more important reason was his inability to preach skillfully on any subject.

6. Before making a statement or recommending a program, a sound foundation of facts is indispensable. A sudden interest is not always a sound interest. Accurate, adequate evidence is always superior to unsupported assertions and conclusions. An emotional runaway can have pathetic consequences if it leaves a local church "holding the bag." A clergyman stirred one community into a holy crusade against the local officials for granting too many liquor licenses only to discover that under the state law they had no option to do otherwise. Commenting on this incident, Carl Knudsen observed, "Like generals we need to spend plenty of time on our maps before we rush to call out the marines."<sup>7</sup>

This requires acceptance of the obligation to gather reliable data. One must pay the price of mastering the necessary background courses or supplementary reading in religion, sociology, economics, or social ethics. To be sure, the raw bones of research must be clothed in popular language and dramatic appeal. Always, however, emotional support must be an acces-

<sup>7</sup> "The Local Church in Social Action," *The Christian Century Pulpit*, July, 1938, p. 164.

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sory to the fact rather than a vagrant spirit without visible means of support.

Discussion should proceed on the plane of objective inquiry rather than of biased defense. If one is fair to the contrary position, recognizing its strong points as well as its weaknesses, and if one then invites judgment of irrefutable evidence in support of his own position, he is more likely to win converts than if he engages in partisan propaganda which is easily assailable and which arouses all the fight there is in his opponents.

7. Whenever possible, advanced positions should be taken unitedly. It is often both unnecessary and ineffective to let one man bear the onus and draw the fire for a cause to which a larger number of persons are committed. If an unpopular position is to be defended, it is wise to assemble all possible allies in a joint action. Better than a lonely clergyman is a church committee. Still better is an entire congregation, or a ministerial association, or a citizens' committee. In organizing such common action, representatives should be included from as wide a geographical area, as inclusive a social and political position, and as high a prestige level as possible.

The purpose of such planning is not to stifle the opposition. The attempt to do so not only would be most undemocratic, but would probably be impossible. Progressive proposals are born into a hostile environment with a safe majority arrayed against them. Majorities are not easily frightened into silence by unpopular idea children, no matter how impressive their parentage. The reason for giving prophetic proposals as broad an original support as possible is to prevent their being immediately cast aside by their hearers and to win for the proposals a fair hearing in the democratic forum of public discussion.

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In addition to such joint presentations as it is possible to organize, ideas can be supported by the prestige of respected authority, by referring to those outside the community who hold a similar position. Footnotes of this sort are useful not only in scholarly monographs, but also in oral discourse and in campaign literature. To quote the World Council of Churches, a national organization, an influential magazine, or a respected religious leader may win for an idea a much-deserved second thought. Such a supporting reference may transform into creative bilateral discussion what otherwise might have been a final unilateral ultimatum from the opposition.

Many congregations and communities have been surfeited by a steady diet of secular conservative opinion temptingly served up by all the commonly available newspapers and radio commentators. For the sake of the stimulus of interacting ideas it is highly important in such situations to make available liberal magazines, church-school curriculum materials, or forum speakers. Many provincial groups will not grow satisfactorily until they have been introduced to a climate of opinion outside the confines of their customary cubicles. When they do emerge into such a larger world, they are likely to discover that the thoughts of their leaders are also to be found in the minds of other respectable people. Whether or not they adopt the ideas, they at least will have their own growth stimulated by seriously grappling with them.

8. After all these suggestions have been made for minimizing opposition or holding it to a creative level, there is yet one important final word to be spoken. Having done all, stand fast. It is never possible for a creative person to avoid conflict, and he may not be able to escape a crucifixion. Henry Hitt Crane looked deeply into the characteristics of human nature and the processes of history when he wrote:

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How preach "unpopular truth" and "get away with it"? Frankly, I do not know. What servant is better than His Lord? The Master alienated the crowd, antagonized the ignorant and the wicked, irritated the intelligentsia and the influential—and at thirty-three he was crucified by the combined cruelty of all. It is by no means a minister's prime concern, therefore, whether he can "get away with it" or not. His major fear should always be lest he get away *from* such preaching.<sup>8</sup>

What happens to the minister or to any other individual leader is of secondary concern. The creative person has committed his life to a cause greater than himself, in which he is willing to lose himself. Knowing the difficulties of the way, he has given up the assurance of success in terms of this world. He knows that there are times for risking his fortunes in a lone battle with evil. He recognizes that there are occasions for a courageous stand regardless of consequences to himself or his organization. While he tries to bring his group with him as far as possible, he knows that sometimes a cataclysmic break may be necessary.

Such a course may be the only way to arouse a community from apathy. Martyrdom itself has educational value. Suffering is a technique of social change. The sight of Jesus on the cross still draws men to him. Many another of the noble company of saints, from Paul to Niemöller, has witnessed as eloquently from his prison cell as ever he did from a public rostrum.

When is the proper time to use a slower educational approach, and when ought one risk a catastrophic break? When should one remain near the point at which the group finds itself, and when should he take a stand for the full truth he

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.



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feels? This is the most perplexing and soul-searing dilemma a religious leader faces. Sometimes one course of action is more creative; under other circumstances the other procedure is called for. Faced with Herod's opposition Jesus withdrew from Galilee (Luke 13:31-33). On another occasion "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). To be torn between these two choices is a pain which only the man of deep integrity and high ideals can feel. Compromise is necessary in a sinful world in which all choices open to us are often contaminated by evil. Yet too great a compromise denies the goal we seek to serve. The ideal can only be approximated in our time. Which combination of values constitutes the closest possible approximation?

Walter Rauschenbusch expressed the dilemma of the prophetic leader in an unforgettable simile when he suggested that such a leader might be likened to an engine attached to a train of cars. The urgency of his message impels him to cut the coupling and to dash down the track alone. By so doing he might travel the fastest, but he would pull no freight. Neither, however, will the demands for rapid action imposed by serious social disorganization allow him to wait for the last car in his following to come along. How many cars should the engine try to pull?

No neat set of criteria can be listed which will automatically answer that question. Each situation will still demand travail of thought and persistence in prayer. Four questions might well be raised by the leader, however, which may help to point the way to the proper answer:

1. How pliable is the situation in which one finds himself? Can a continuation of a slower educational approach be expected eventually to produce adequate changes in attitudes and action? Are there groups within the whole congregation



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and community which will respond even if others do not? Is it reasonable to expect early changes in attendant circumstances which will make the situation more flexible?

2. How urgent is the change advocated, or how important is the principle at stake? Is the matter at issue so crucial that it is necessary to move ahead immediately with such minority forces as one can muster in a dramatic witness to the larger community, or can society afford the luxury of a longer period of educational preparation? When a nation teeters on the brink of atomic war or disastrous depression, there is no longer time for a slow process of developing educational resources. Under such circumstances there is an even more desperate need for a daring prophetic voice than at other times. A related item for consideration is the importance of the point at issue. One person cannot be crucified on all contemporary crosses. There are relatively minor matters on which it may be well to compromise for the sake of a continuing program on major fronts. There are other positions so thoroughgoing in their influence and so complete a denial of the Christian witness that to become implicated in them is to cause one's voice to come with a hollow sound on any matter on which he speaks. There is a point beyond which one cannot go if he is to maintain a basic integrity. There are times when the only possible response is "I can do no otherwise."

3. Will suffering or martyrdom advance the cause? A study of the natural history of suffering as a method of social change demonstrates that whenever a position is too far ahead of its time, he who suffers for it is simply dismissed as a member of the lunatic fringe. Martyrdom under such circumstances wins no disciples. Courageous action may still be called for as a witness to future generations or as a condition of one's own integrity, but no immediate social consequences are to be ex-

pected. If a movement is to be advanced by a man's death, there must somewhere be a band of potential disciples sufficiently trained before the crucifixion. Perhaps this is the reason Jesus chose not to be apprehended by Herod in Galilee.

There is another aspect to this same question. Are there losses which would result from a break with one's constituency which would more than counterbalance the gains? A minister who has stimulated a variety of progressive items in the program of a church may well hesitate before making such a daring statement in one of these fields as would result in both his dismissal from the church and the collapse of the total program in other areas. There are obviously other situations in which such a courageous stand is called for because its value outweighs all other losses. In our complex life there is never a situation in which only one value is involved. Always competing values must be weighed. Such is inevitably the nature of ethical judgment.

4. Have all other procedures been exhausted, or is there an untested course of action which may succeed in moving one's constituency and avoiding a costly break? Often there is such a third alternative were we wise enough to discover it. Have other educational procedures been long enough continued to judge their real effectiveness? Are there points at which opposition might be overcome by more skill on our part? Finite man will always do a great deal of soul-searching at this point. Yet it is also true that if we are not sufficiently omniscient to discover a better way, we must act in one of the ways that does appear open to us.

The listing of the above questions is not intended to oversimplify the issues which a creative leader faces. It is impossible precisely to weigh so many degrees of favorable attitude against so many hours of suffering. Yet if he is not to act

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completely irrationally, a leader must use as objectively as he can such criteria as have been suggested. Even as he does so, of course, he must admit the inadequacy of reason clouded by self-interest. He must beware of rationalization and earnestly try to lose himself in the will of God. One is driven to long periods of prayer and sincere meditation when he seeks to avoid the expediencies which easily beset us in a secularistic culture.

Certainly most of us err more frequently on the side of too easy an adjustment than we do on the side of too adventurous a stand. The fear of consequences often silences us as certainly as would the firing squad of a totalitarian state. Those who conform to social pressures in a democracy may endanger the future of the world just as much as those who acquiesce in the dominance of a dictator. Silence in a tense situation may betray the truth as surely as did Pilate in washing his hands. R. H. Tawney has said, "When to speak is unpopular, it is less pardonable to be silent than to say too much."<sup>9</sup> Jesus repeatedly recalls us from desiring the approval of men rather than of God: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luke 6:26.) "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt. 5:11.)

The Christian can never be content with comfortable conformity, playing the role of the court cat, purring at every stroke from the powers that be. The church and the creative individual must always keep the tension between themselves and their environment as tight as possible. With all available skill they are tugging with all the pressure possible, normally

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in John C. Bennett, "Enduring Bases of Christian Action," *Social Action*, June 15, 1943, p. 29.

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without snapping the ties that bind them to their constituency. The creative prophet is often on the verge of losing his job but ordinarily is never quite discharged. There may come times, however, when the break must come and when the most creative relationship to opposition is steadfastly to set one's face toward Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER V

### *ORGANIZATIONAL AND ECONOMIC ACTION*

MANY A worthy cause has been lost because of the ineptitude of its devotees. Good intentions liberally mixed with sound social goals do not automatically produce wholesome communities. Also indispensable are strategies sufficient to implement intentions and adequate to transform stubborn reality in the direction of desired aims. Mastery by churchmen of such a methodology of social transformation is notoriously feeble. While the church is coming to admit that social action is a major area of its concern, the techniques of social effectiveness are not as widely used or understood as are methods in other areas of the church's work, such as religious education, evangelism, or church administration. Laymen have often seemed to think that the only thing to do with the "social gospel" is to preach it. The lack of a more complete equipment of skills has often doomed the community witness of the church to disastrous weakness.

Our forefathers identified the technique of community reformation with a rousing revival meeting. Their descendants recognize that community problems and social controls are more complex than their spiritual ancestors believed them to be. Yet modern churchmen have not developed correspondingly varied strategies which they are willing to use with as much enthusiasm and devotion as previous generations poured into revivals. Whether the needs of local and world-wide communities are economic justice, firmly-knit families, the aboli-



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tion of alcoholism, or universal peace, what techniques are available to the church and its membership for achieving such ends?

Obviously the possibilities listed in answer to that question cannot be used mechanically as a "bag of tricks" for manipulating any combination of circumstances. Procedures must be adapted imaginatively to each different situation. A knowledge of the range of possibilities, however, makes possible a more adequate and effective development of means for implementing social idealism.

Available methods may for convenience be classified into four general though somewhat overlapping categories: organizational, economic, educational, and political. The first two of these will be discussed in the present chapter, the rest in the chapters to follow.

1. Organizing for social action may in turn be discussed under three headings dealing with the denomination, the local church, and the community at large. Since the focus of this book is the local church and its community, denominational organization can be briefly though firmly touched upon. One major observation demands positive expression. A functional view of the church requires that the organizational structure of the institution reflect its primary purposes. Like the program of the local church the organization of the denomination should grow, not out of custom or internal pressures, but out of analysis of the basic purposes of the church in relationship to world need. There seems to be a growing agreement that the fundamental functions of the church include at least education, evangelism, home and foreign missions, and social action. Ought not each of these four be given organizational recognition and support through a major national board of the denomination? Not only in one or three of these areas, but in

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all four a strong central agency is required to stimulate local interest and to implement the positions and programs adopted by the denomination. The first three of these areas have traditionally been given strong organizational support. It is the fourth field, social action or community relations, which has been most neglected. While significant progress has been made in recent decades toward more suitable structural support, there is still a sizable lag to be caught up. After a survey of the attitudes and practices of the national agencies of 240 Protestant bodies in the United States one sociologist recently concluded, "This study indicates that although the churches are interested in social action, their programs are still embryonic and have not developed into a potent force in modern society."<sup>1</sup> Of all the areas of basic concern within the church the greatest organizational expansion during coming decades ought to be made in the realm of social action.

2. The same statement can be made about most local churches. A recent study I made indicated that even among those churches nominated by denominational executives as the most active in the social field one out of six did not have a standing committee in this area. One would expect that the ratio of unorganized churches would be even higher among churches in general. Congregations which would not think of carrying on a church-school program without a committee on Christian education seem often to assume that the community responsibility of the church can be discharged without a responsible planning group in that area. We do not hesitate to organize committees to hire the choir director, to build the new sanctuary, or to clean up after the annual bazaar. The list of typical committees strongly reflects the institu-

<sup>1</sup> Judson T. Landis, "Social Action in American Protestant Churches," *American Journal of Sociology*, May, 1947, p. 522.

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tionalized interests of the church. They often deal merely with the means rather than the ends, the structure rather than the function of the organization. In contrast to this situation the most important committees ought to parallel the basic purposes of the church. If community service is one of these primary functions, there must come to be a strong social action committee or its equivalent in every congregation. From the standpoint of the church's total responsibility an active group in this area is as essential as a junior department in the church school.

The title attached to such a committee is of course of little importance. If the term "social action" arouses improper connotations or latent opposition, another should be used. While they may not provide an exact equivalent, terms such as "community service," "social problems," or "community action" may be adopted. The important thing is that the community witness of the church should be given the stimulus and guidance of a responsible group.

Ideally such a committee should grow out of a genuine feeling of need. A local issue of the moment may demand a specialized committee to deal with it. A church-community survey may uncover needs which have never before been recognized. A restudy of the function of the church may make this gap in organization so apparent that there will arise a demand to make up for past negligence. Often the minister or a few interested people will need to take the initiative in arousing or articulating this sense of need.

The form of the committee will vary with denominational polity, size of the church, or available leadership. The fact of organizing congregational resources for a stronger community impact is more important than the form the organization takes. The suggestions which follow, while they grow out of a con-

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siderable body of experience, must nevertheless be adapted to the peculiarities of varying local situations.

Like other basic committees the social action committee should be responsible to and appointed by the official governing body of the church. Two principles, which may occasionally be contradictory, apply to the selection of committee members. Those with a genuine interest in community action should be placed on the committee. The difference between a moribund group, existing only in the secretary's minutes, and an alert, active committee depends largely on whether the members think the matter important enough to invest time and to exercise a continuing initiative. In the second place, the committee should include representatives of the important organizations of the church if it is to stimulate and correlate their activities. At least the women's, youth, and men's organizations and the committee on Christian education should be so represented. If one of the officers of these groups carries the responsibility for social action, he becomes the logical appointee. In addition several members-at-large should be added, chosen from among those with a particular interest or competence in the field. Among these might be available laymen who are vocationally engaged in related fields such as a social worker, a sincere employer, a Christian labor leader, or an officer of a consumers' co-operative.

As the need arises, the committee would do well to set up subcommittees, or in a small church to assign specialized responsibility to individual members. These divisions of labor may be made either on the basis of areas of action (such as family life, temperance and public morals, economic problems, race relations, and international affairs) or in accord with techniques of action (such as education, political action, or co-operation with community agencies). Specialized com-



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mittees will often be set up on difficult or acute problems, while individual members of the committee are asked to act as "watchdogs" in other areas of action. Certain members might thus keep posted on the activities of the city council or the state legislature, while others become specialists in race relations, world peace, or other similar areas. Such specialists should join the worth-while community organizations active in their fields of concern, such as the Parent Teachers Association or the United Nations association, both in order to channel the programs of such organization to the committee and to make the influence of Christian insight felt within the community organization.

The Social Action Committee of the First Congregational Church of Atlanta for a time divided its membership into "sitters," "joiners," and "helpers." The "sitters" attended civic meetings of the school board, city council, and the like. They sat, listened, and reported. Their very presence was a reminder to civic groups that a larger public, including the Christian Church, was concerned about their actions. The "joiners" affiliated with civic or reform organizations such as those mentioned above. They became "interlocking directors," weaving a fabric of co-ordination between community groups with a common interest. The "helpers" actively enlisted for some civic service, such as a low-cost housing project, registration of voters, or equalized teachers' salaries.<sup>2</sup>

Such a division of membership is related to the varied functions of a social action committee. At least four aspects of its work should be recognized: (1) educating its own membership through reading, resource persons, or other study projects; (2) educating the congregation at large through litera-

<sup>2</sup> *Together* (a newsletter of the Congregational-Christian Council for Social Action), June 1, 1948.



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ture distribution, forums, and other devices to be considered in a later chapter; (3) taking action in the name of the committee itself when the congregation is not ready or able to move as a whole; (4) acting as a representative of the congregation at legislative hearings, interviews with officials, or in other situations in which action has been authorized. It will ordinarily not be the responsibility of this committee to supervise the basic ongoing curriculum of social education. That is part of the province of the department of Christian education. The social action committee's specialization is in action projects aimed at changing community conditions and in such restricted educational activities as are necessary to give intelligent support to these projects.

The last three of the functions listed above involve co-ordination of the social action programs of various groups within the church. While separate groups should be encouraged to adopt projects of interest to them, a united impact is sometimes essential. The women's society may be trying to secure a state civil rights law, while the young adult group is collecting clothing for overseas, and the youth fellowship is working on community recreational facilities. As each is brought to support the other, success is much more likely to be achieved in each project. In a similar way the social action committee ought to become the channel through which co-operation with community agencies is co-ordinated.

The importance of the functions of this committee demands more than the usual competence on the part of its members. The best possible resource literature and training opportunities should be made available to them. While there is still not as much guidance material available in this area as there is for other basic committees of the church, several denominations and interdenominational groups are issuing increasingly meri-

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torious aids for the self-education of the committee. City councils of churches sometimes provide workshops which are helpful. A part of each of the regular meetings of the committee might well be devoted to training for more adequate service.

The program of the committee will emerge from a study of the most crucial needs of the local and the larger community. Those findings of a church-community survey which point to serious social problems and immature social attitudes ought to be analyzed by the committee. While no more projects ought to be promoted at any one time than can be handled with a fair chance of success, the total program over a period of years should be comprehensive in its coverage. Vigorous punches at John Barleycorn are called for, but additional bouts with Midas or Mars ought also be scheduled. Local community concerns, such as better recreation or housing, need to be balanced with broader interests, such as world peace or national civil liberties. Preparation of a social action calendar will help the committee at this point. Scheduling periods of emphasis, perhaps coinciding with special days or seasons, such as Labor Day or Brotherhood Week, will help both in concentrating efforts and in keeping the concentrations diversified.

As much as is possible such a program should be carried out through already established organizations within the church. Community concerns need to be integrated into the total program rather than become the exclusive monopoly of a "fanatical fringe." Specific responsibilities might be accepted by youth groups or women's organizations. Other major committees, such as those on evangelism or education, are often ready to co-operate in appropriate ways. Many items ought to be referred to the official governing body of the

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church for action. Meetings of such official boards have often come alive after a round of routine matters drowsily approved, when a resolution on a current social issue was introduced. It ought to become as common for these bodies to take action on items before Congress or the city council as it is for them to fix the minister's salary.

Periodic evaluation of program is as essential for the social action committee as it is for any other continuously dynamic group. Particularly is this necessary because of the difficulties which are likely to be faced and the frustrations which are likely to result. Without becoming hypercritical of itself the committee should occasionally ask whether real progress is being made, whether the most vital areas have been touched, and whether the most effective possible techniques are being used. The social action committee is a vital nerve center for the total impact of the church on its social environment. Such a center must remain consistently healthy and alive.

3. Organizational techniques must also reach beyond the local church into the community at large if enough allies are to be recruited to complete most needed reforms. Eternal vigilance and participation by its citizens is the price not only of freedom, but of community welfare in general. That community is likely to be best which has the highest proportion of citizens actively related to purposive social action. Yet as localities grow in size, there develops a characteristic pressure against such participation. As specialization and secondary contacts become more important, there appears a greater tendency to "let George do it," George being the mayor, the school principal, the county agent, or the secretary-general of the United Nations.

A study of sample groups in New York City in 1934-35 showed that 60 per cent of working-class men and 53 per cent

of white-collar men had no organized group affiliations whatever except perhaps the church. Church membership was not considered an affiliation unless the person belonged to a group within the church. Many of the group affiliations which were counted had little significance for community improvement projects. The percentage of unaffiliated women was even greater, amounting to 88 per cent in the labor class and 63 per cent of white-collar women. While group participation was consistently greater as position in the economic scale became higher, the author concluded that "in the bulk of the City's population, the unaffiliated persons constituted a majority." This nonmembership in organizations, it was pointed out, "implies that sections of our population are cut off from channels of power, information, growth, and a sense of participation in purposive social action."<sup>3</sup> While many of us complain about too many meetings to attend, many more among us seem to include too few such claims on our time. Worthy projects continuously fail from lack of enough mass support. A larger percentage of the population must be enlisted into organizations which enable citizens unitedly to effect desired changes in mass society.

The church therefore ought to accept as one of its responsibilities the strengthening of already existing community organizations with related interests. To avoid a needless multiplication of associations, existing agencies should be used wherever possible. Sometimes a "ready-made" group can be revitalized or reorganized if it has become moribund, or the function of a group with limited horizons may be expanded into related areas to deal with unmet needs. Church members can be urged to join and become active in such groups. Their

<sup>3</sup> Mirra Komarovsky, "The Voluntary Associations of Urban Dwellers," *American Sociological Review*, December, 1946, pp. 686-98.



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worth-while projects can be given publicity through the church. Parallel or perhaps joint action should often be undertaken by the church and community groups of high principle.

National as well as local organizations qualify at this point. Frequently these reform groups languish in some far-off headquarters for lack of support at the same time that numbers of scattered churchmen are sincerely perplexed about where they can take hold of a problem which has aroused their interest. When a church member develops a specific social concern, someone on the church staff should be prepared to act as a referral agency, recommending an appropriate national agency with which he can affiliate. Somewhere in every well-equipped church office should be found not only the local handbook of social agencies, but also a list of national reform groups.<sup>4</sup> The switchboard function of connecting a volunteer with the proper resource group performs a double service. Not only does it strengthen organized social action movements, but it contributes to the religious growth of the church member. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union has conserved and deepened many a commitment made at the altars of the church. Organizations in other areas of concern can do likewise.

Where no community group exists to meet an important need, especially on the local level, one ought to be organized. Often the initiative of only one person is all that is needed to begin the process. Churchmen, acting ordinarily in their individual capacities, should be eager to supply that initiative. It was a young layman, Ray Reinert, who inserted an ad-

<sup>4</sup> For a lengthy list of such groups see Charles R. Read and Samuel Marble, *Guide to Public Affairs Organizations* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1946) or the most recent edition of the *Social Work Year Book*. For a selective recommendation a denominational social action board or a well-oriented local minister ought to be consulted.



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vertisement in the *Columbus Citizen* expressing his concern about race relations. That act started a chain of events which led to the organization of the Columbus Council for Democracy with its creative co-ordinating program in this area.<sup>5</sup>

Such new special interest groups ought to develop functionally in response to definite needs. Whether the community deficiency is at the point of medical service to the poor, liquor control, or governmental reform, physical and intellectual "muscle" ought to be thrown into organizations to close the gap. Sponsors with prestige need to be enlisted, including key people in strategic groups such as churches, labor unions, employers' associations, civic clubs, minority groups, veterans' organizations, or political parties. Mass support must be recruited by personal contacts and through interested organizations. All the skill and ingenuity which have gone into building organizations within the church, or in private business, need to be utilized by laymen in the development of community service organizations.

A remarkable example of this has been provided by the "two hundred men of Louisville" who formed the Committee on Institutions of the Louisville Council of Churches. The inspiration for the present program of the committee came from George Stoll, a layman. Leaving his Methodist church one Sunday after a particularly inspiring sermon, another worshiper commented, "I've heard many sermons just like that one. They inspire you to do something for your fellow man, but nobody tells you what to do or how to do it." That set Stoll to thinking. How could congregations be brought to do more than just congregate? A committee aiming to improve conditions in Louisville's penal, health, and child-

<sup>5</sup> Roy A. Burkhardt, "A City Takes Democracy Seriously," *The Christian Advocate*, July 5, 1945, pp. 17-18.

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care institutions occurred to him as a possible concrete expression of religious idealism.

He began visiting other churches, securing nominations from ministers, and recruiting lay supporters. An interdenominational group of approximately two hundred active members was organized under the Council of Churches into twelve subcommittees, each responsible for contacts with a local institution such as the state reformatory, criminal court, children's center, general hospital, or home for the aged. A basic policy is that there will be no unfavorable public criticism of the administration of these institutions, but that a sympathetic, helpful approach is to be used. The committee has investigated conditions (including one thirty-hour vigil at the county jail), brought in outside authorities, and made numerous recommendations. Growing out of these suggestions have come such varied results as a library and gymnasium for the county jail, a handbook for grand jurors, the founding of a flourishing boys' club, and the appointment of a clinically trained chaplain at the state penitentiary. The captain of the Police Department's Crime Prevention Bureau has given the committee credit for a major part in a 47 per cent decline in the city's juvenile delinquency. A modern prison farm and mental hygiene clinics are among the long-range projects being developed.<sup>6</sup> All this is a convincing demonstration of the potential power among lay persons, awaiting the touch of initiative in organization.

In addition to these organizational procedures a second major category to be explored by the community-minded

<sup>6</sup> J. Maurice Trimmer, "Two Hundred Men of Louisville," *The Christian Century*, May 7, 1947, pp. 588-89; "Story of a Layman Who 'Did Something About It,'" *Federal Council Bulletin*, June, 1947, pp. 6-7, 19; George Stoll, *The Layman Helps the Warden* (privately printed pamphlet, 1947).

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church is that of economic action. In entering this field one touches upon one of the most neglected areas in the entire ecclesiastical program. Organizational, educational, and even political procedures have been recognized as means for attaining the social goals of churchmen. Only sporadically have they seen the possibilities in corresponding economic strategies. A lengthy list of community problems, including alcoholism, infant mortality, or unwholesome recreation, is related to the production and consumption of economic goods and services. For this type of problem economic action techniques are appropriate. Labor has made effective use of the strike; management has used the curtailment of production or other economic devices to achieve its social ends. While on occasion individual church members might urge the use of such techniques by other groups, these particular methods are scarcely available to the local congregation as projects of its social action committee. Three techniques of economic action are, however, suitable to the church: selective patronage, exemplary action in institutional practices, and encouraging the organization of alternative forms of economic activity.

1. Selective patronage is the channeling of purchasing power in the directions demanded by one's social ideals. Negatively this involves the boycott, or the refusal to patronize and thereby to strengthen economic structures which are in conflict with desired ends. Positively this means shifting patronage to economic enterprises considered desirable, thereby strengthening them in relationship to those boycotted and increasing the likelihood that the approved structures and practices will eventually supplant those considered unwholesome for the community. Positive and negative expressions of selective patronage are of course merely opposite sides of

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the same coin. To patronize one producer is to withhold patronage from others.

That this involves an element of coercion cannot be denied. The producer from whom patronage is withdrawn is not necessarily persuaded of the error of his ways. If he changes his course of action, it is more likely because he has been forced to do so by the united economic power of consumers. For this reason, from the standpoint of the perfect ideal, selective patronage must be placed on a somewhat lower level ethically than the various types of persuasive educational techniques. The boycott involves a compromise because it denies full freedom of choice and infringes the autonomy of the person coerced by economic pressure. It may nevertheless be justified. Since this is not the place for a detailed discussion of the problem of coercion, suffice it to say that most modern thinkers in the field of Christian ethics feel that coercion cannot be completely eliminated in a society which still includes men who do evil. The evildoer must often be restrained lest he fasten his control upon the mass of men, denying the freedom of the many and poisoning the relationships of society. The immediate goal with respect to coercion is not to eliminate it, but rather to keep it at a minimum and to make it progressively more nonviolent and democratically responsible.

Most churchmen would probably agree that the particular form of coercion involved in selective patronage does not pose a serious problem. Some such pressure is inevitable whenever we exercise a consumer's choice in a competitive economy. The family installing a washing machine cannot buy one from every dealer in America. It must inevitably select one dealer and by its purchase make it more likely that he shall succeed and that all others shall fail. It is certainly better to make the selection on the basis of intelligent principle



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rather than of ignorance or caprice. From the standpoint of the patron such rational selection is simply the expression of integrity. The alert Christian cannot in good conscience contribute to the profits of gamblers or murderers. Handling his money according to the requirements of stewardship requires that he shall channel it to more idealistic producers. Purchasing power, which will of necessity be expended in some way to sustain life, can also be made a technique of social change.

For these reasons churchmen have frequently exercised selective patronage, either as an individual witness or in an organized campaign. Many have preferred to patronize other church members, presumably to encourage their assumed superior ethics in the business world. Others have refused to buy from any establishment which also sold liquor. Others have given preference to restaurants or other enterprises which did not discriminate racially. One church group attempting to open barber shops in its town to Negroes circulated statements for signature of Caucasians, asserting that they would continue to patronize shops which served an interracial clientele. Other groups have circulated "white lists" of establishments which did not discriminate.

One of the most striking and widespread campaigns under church auspices is that directed against movies considered undesirable by the Catholic Church's National Legion of Decency. Supported by Pius XI's 1936 Encyclical *Vigilante Cura*, the Legion circulates the following pledge for signature by loyal Catholics:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

I CONDEMN indecent and immoral motion pictures, and those which glorify crime or criminals.



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I PROMISE to do all that I can to strengthen public opinion against the production of indecent and immoral films, and to unite with all who protest against them.

I ACKNOWLEDGE my obligation to form a right conscience about pictures that are dangerous to my moral life. As a member of the Legion of Decency, I pledge myself to remain away from them. I promise, further, to stay away altogether from places of amusement which show them as a matter of policy.

Films are regularly reviewed and classified with the results given wide publicity through a special bulletin and the church press. There can be little doubt that this continuous campaign along with similar ventures made by some Protestant groups has had important effects on the policy of Hollywood. Even after one has allowed for possible journalistic selectivity, the following *Newsweek* account illustrates the reaction to an early onslaught of the legion:

Hollywood was still in a daze last week as a result of the campaign to clean up the films. Blows still came strong and often. It hardly recovered from one punch when another landed.

One of the biggest blows was struck in Philadelphia, where Cardinal Dougherty commanded his people to boycott the films entirely. His Eminence then left for Rome to visit the Pope. So literally were Catholics in Philadelphia obeying their absent shepherd last week that Warner Brothers and other organizations controlling 470 theatres gave two weeks' notice that if the boycott continues their theatres will be closed. . . .

Only in Philadelphia and St. Louis has the Catholic Church decreed a wholesale boycott. In 42 other Dioceses, Bishops are merely using the Legion of Decency pledge—to stay away only from indecent films. . . .

Figures last week showed effects of the crusade against "immorality." In small cities attendance dropped 20 per cent—in

some towns as much as 35 per cent. Hollywood did not like this news. It knows that smaller cities are the backbone of its existence. There are 16,850 movie theatres in the country, and 10,888 of these are in towns of 20,000 or less population. In towns, with their intimate and neighborly atmosphere, churches are exerting their strongest influence. . . .

Meanwhile, Protestants are not letting grass grow under their feet. One denomination after another has sent word to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America that they want to enlist in the drive. . . .

Out in Hollywood, producers last week turned hand-springs trying to show how moral they are going to be in the future. Calculating the earnings of what they consider their twenty most lurid films, they announced that Mae West's "I'm No Angel" was a hit, two others made good money, and seventeen were failures. They agreed perhaps they had been wrong and the public is right. Their next job is to go over the 600 films scheduled for 1934-35 production and prove their word. Warner Brothers defined their coming shows as "clean as a hound's tooth." <sup>7</sup>

If selective patronage is in order in the limited area in which it has been applied, it is also called for in a considerably wider territory. As it is important to avoid giving support to the liquor salesman or the purveyor of indecency, so also is it essential that the Christian not become an accomplice of those who commit fraud or exploitation. In so far as it is possible, ought not churchmen also withdraw their patronage from business firms which deceive the public through misleading advertising or which gouge their fellow man by cutthroat competition or a niggardly wage policy? The lowest price for the highest quality is not the only consideration in select- ing purchases. As a rough though by no means perfect guaran-

<sup>7</sup> July 14, 1934, p. 33. Used by permission of *Newsweek*.

tee that they will not sin too blatantly in this fashion, many thoughtful people prefer to buy goods manufactured under union conditions or sold from the shelves of a consumers' co-operative. Each local church ought to face the issue as to whether its building contracts do not require investigation of the labor policy of the contractor, and whether the insurance on its building or the provisions for its church suppers should not be bought through co-operative channels.

Saintly John Woolman ought to stir our consciences to new sensitivity at this point. Because dyes were being used which harmed workers, he wore undyed garments. He made his preaching journeys on foot to avoid complicity in the miseries of the postboys used on the carriages. He refused to use sugar produced by slave labor, and he took a ship to visit the West Indies only on the condition that he pay enough more than the stipulated fare to pay the laborers involved on a level different than slaves. Even on his deathbed he was willing to use only such medicines as "did not come through defiled channels or oppressive hands." Other great spirits have reacted in similar ways. Gandhi wore homespun and lived in simplicity for reasons of principle. In nineteenth-century England it used to be said that you could always tell a Christian Socialist by the cut of his co-operative trousers. Whatever his general economic philosophy may be, ought not the conscientious modern Christian develop some sort of similar identifying marks?

2. In addition to channeling purchases the church and individual churchmen can influence economic affairs through employment policy, investment procedure, and income standards. Wherever exemplary action in these areas is to be found, the reign of God's righteous will is extended over a somewhat wider area of economic life. In addition to resolving that

other employers ought to pay adequate wages the church ought to provide decent incomes for its own employees. As Elmore McKee has pointed out:

One has no right to thump the pulpit for social justice or world order unless the life and structure of the parish validates internally one's pronouncements to the world. For example, it is certainly morally invalid for us to preach industrial peace if we are not still more concerned about the social security and salaries we provide for our own janitors.<sup>8</sup>

Not only is supporting practice necessary to make the oral witness of the church fully persuasive, but to the extent that judgment begins in the house of the Lord, to that extent community reform has already been accomplished in a significant area. Henry Hodgkin used to say that Christian experiments can be infectious just as diseases are. He hoped for the creation of islands of idealism in the pagan sea, islands which would grow and multiply until a new continent emerged from the ocean. By its actions in the microcosm of its own structure the church is altering the nature of the macrocosm, the world which it would redeem.

An adequate employment policy involves a review not only of wages paid, but of such matters as hours, vacations, working conditions, health and accident insurance, pension provisions, and attitude toward collective bargaining. For years the "Social Ideals of the Churches," as adopted by the Federal Council, have stood for such features as adequate wages, wholesome working conditions, and the right of employees to organize for collective bargaining. Yet ministerial and lay

<sup>8</sup> "Implementing the Ecumenical Ideal at the Parish Level," in *Toward World-Wide Christianity*, ed. O. Frederick Nolde (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), p. 229.

employees of the church have often not been given the security demanded for others, and it has seemed easy to forget the provision about collective bargaining when a church publishing house or the building of a new church was involved. Furthermore, as the church increasingly asks that equal economic opportunity be given to members of racial and cultural minorities, it must be prepared to bring its own actions into accord with its words.

The witness of the church in handling its investment funds requires attention as part of its community action program. How markedly do the criteria used by church organizations in selecting investments for their portfolios differ from those accepted by other prudent investors? Are safety and yield the major factors considered, or the character of the business and its social contribution? A fuller study is required to answer these questions. Undoubtedly some securities, such as those of the liquor industry, are often considered inappropriate for acquisition by the church. Ought not, however, the standards of the Christian faith lead to an even more incisive discrimination?

Critical awareness is also essential in reviewing the sources of income of the church. To what extent is its budget balanced by "tainted" money or by gifts with such "strings" attached as limit the full function of the church? The matter of types of funds to accept is a complex problem. In a real sense in an imperfect, interdependent society all money is to some extent "tainted"; even the most sincere and devoted churchman does not have to trace his income back very far to a source which in one way or another compromises the full Christian ideal. The church therefore faces a choice between relatives rather than absolutes. There will always be borderline cases to plague the judgment of the conscientious congregation.



Nevertheless it should be clear that there are some sources of income so seriously questionable that they must be rejected by the church as resolutely as John Woolman refused to accept free hospitality from slaveholders.

This is essential not only to maintain full freedom of function to the church, but also as part of its social witness. To accept part of the profits of *pari mutuel* betting is to make one's words against gambling come with a hollow sound. Every gift from gamblers rejected, if given effective publicity, is a blow at gambling more effective than the most eloquent sermon. The definition of seriously antisocial acts to which the church has reacted in this way has usually been extremely lenient. There are other forms of exploitation just as serious as gambling or vice to which the church has not been equally alert. Deepening ethical sensitivity would undoubtedly lead us more often to refer to the saying, "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24 R.S.V.). Even though some proffered gifts were withdrawn or were used up in the process of reconciliation and restitution to those wronged, the church would still find itself in a stronger position. A reduced budget and simpler buildings which the church can afford without seriously questionable support make for a more virile ethical witness and a stronger community impact than do massive structures and expanded staff used to proclaim a message which is so compromised that it challenges no one. Jesus seated on a rock in the fields contributed more to community change than many a cathedral which has sold its soul for stained glass and organs.

3. A third form of economic action is the provision of al-

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ternative forms for supplying goods and services. One may wish to patronize only such enterprises as live up to certain standards, but none such may be available. The appropriate social action project then is to organize such alternatives, be they recreation centers, co-operative groceries, or special movie showings. The educational program of the church may lead devout students to conclude, "Something ought to be done about it." The doing frequently involves economic organization to meet a neglected need.

Much of the missionary program of the church has concerned itself with this technique, providing swimming pools in institutional churches in the slums, exchange-of-work co-operatives during depressions, or Goodwill Industries for the handicapped. Numerous churches in attacking juvenile delinquency have established youth centers.

In some of these activities it would appear as though the church itself has gone into business. There is rather general agreement that this is appropriate to the function of the church as an institution only when the enterprise involved is of a nonprofit, social-service nature. When the required alternative structure becomes part of the competitive struggle with other enterprises and of the relativities of the existing economic system, then its organization and management go beyond the function of the church. The church as an organization ought not go into business in this sense. Its responsibility here is to urge individual laymen to enter into these new fields and to provide the novel economic forms which are required.

Prominent in this latter category in capturing the imagination of a growing number of church groups is the organization of co-operatives of various kinds. Marketing co-operatives of farmers, credit unions, and purchasing co-operatives for a

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wide variety of goods and services have grown out of the initiative of a minister or of a study group within the church.

It is estimated that in the United States and Canada about 575 credit unions have been organized among the members of local churches. One of these, in a Disciples church in Indiana, grew out of a study which showed that many church members were being victimized by interest rates of 25 to 42 per cent on short-term loans. Beginning with nineteen members the group devoted to "brotherhood finance" grew steadily. "About the early loans made, the following was reported: One family was enabled to save a home, one paid a hospital bill, one consolidated and cleared long-standing debts, one took a business course, one purchased furniture." In a letter describing the experience the minister wrote, "We are strong for the credit union in the church. . . . It develops solidarity on a high level." <sup>9</sup>

Numerous co-operatives providing groceries, gasoline, hardware, farm machinery, and a variety of other products and services came to birth through the initiative of a minister or church group. One started on three shelves in a parsonage kitchen, although the minister soon "fired himself" as storekeeper and the co-op moved into a building of its own. Another co-operative began with a class in a church and "a Methodist woodshed"; this venture grew into an enterprise doing a half-million-dollar business annually.<sup>10</sup> A priest in a Negro slum parish discovered that in many homes children were kept in bed on cold winter days because of the high

<sup>9</sup> Benson Y. Landis, *The Church and Credit Unions* (New York: Federal Council of Churches, 1947), pp. 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Benson Y. Landis, *Manual on the Church and Cooperatives* (New York: Federal Council of Churches, 1947). See this and the preceding pamphlet for additional illustrations and practical suggestions.

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price of coal. He moved to organize a coal co-operative which under its own organization and management grew to operate fifteen coalyards selling at a substantial saving to patrons. When meat prices went up, a chicken co-operative was organized, bringing meat to poverty-stricken tables at about half its previous cost.<sup>11</sup>

One of the advantages of this technique of organizing alternative enterprises is that a comparatively small group can meet a major community need on its own initiative. A reform can be effected without waiting to win over a majority of the citizens or moving a reluctant legislative body. A new and improved order can be actualized in one spot. One's social goal can be obtained immediately in miniature. As the number of such experiments are multiplied, and as they prove their worth to growing numbers of local groups, nations can be transformed. The Kingdom of God begins in local neighborhoods and on individual streets with the initiative of a single person.

<sup>11</sup> Alberta Williams, "Father Andrews and His Parishioners," *Survey Graphic*, May, 1944, pp. 250, 266-67.

## CHAPTER VI

### TECHNIQUES FOR SOCIAL EDUCATION

HADLEY CANTRIL, director of the Office of Public Opinion Research at Princeton University, has reported that of the samples of adults polled in the United States less than half knew that this country was not a member of the League of Nations. Nothing had ever been heard or read about the Atlantic Charter by 60 per cent. Over one third could not define a tariff, and about 94 per cent did not know what a reciprocal trade treaty is. Approximately 30 per cent were unaware that the Japanese had captured the Philippines. Two thirds did not know that the states set the voting requirements. Nearly 70 per cent were ignorant of the fact that a vote of two thirds of the Senate alone is required for the ratification of a treaty.<sup>1</sup> Since the health of a free society depends upon an informed citizenry, surely this is an emergency for democracy.

The future of civilization is at stake in the decisions which must be made by the present generation of mankind. To develop resources adequate for such decisions in the time remaining to us, as Robert M. Hutchins, former chancellor of the University of Chicago, has pointed out, will require such a project of mass public education as we have never before completed in a similar length of time. We dare not wait for today's children to graduate from existing schools. The fate of the world may be decided before they grow up. We must

<sup>1</sup> Hadley Cantril, "What We Don't Know Is Likely to Hurt Us," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 14, 1944, p. 9. Cf. Thomas A. Bailey, *The Man in the Street* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), chaps. 10-12.



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accelerate what is ordinarily a slow educational process in keeping with the tempo of world events. We must release personality power equal to the forces of atomic fission.

What agency is better prepared to do this than the church? As the church once pioneered in establishing schools and colleges, so—if it will—it can now take the lead in mass education projects. The church can fill an indispensable role in becoming a large-scale training center for adequate citizenship. Over half the population of the country is numbered in its membership. Over a quarter of a million churches provide meeting places scattered in rough conformity with the distribution of the population. Approximately 150,000 clergymen are available for professional leadership. While schools are preoccupied and often overburdened with the teaching of the young, the church reaches all age groups. While various interests propagandize for a restricted, self-interested point of view, the church is committed to a disinterested, objective search for the will of God which transcends all particular group interests. While education is often thought of in narrow terms comprehending only knowledge and skills, the church is concerned also with attitudes and loyalties. Characteristically the church has considered education to include not only the acceptance of scientific data or ethical illumination but also religious experience and the commitment of life in profound decision.

Of all the strategies for social action which can be listed, educational procedures in the broader sense just described have traditionally been considered the peculiar province of the church. Yet the variety of educational possibilities in the social field has commonly been underestimated, and their full force has never been utilized. Without going to the lengths of a complete textbook in religious education, what are the prin-

cial practical procedures available to the socially concerned church? For purposes of discussion such educational techniques may be classified into three groups: individual person-to-person contacts, group meetings, and public appeals. In actual practice, of course, these are often used in combination.

1. An easily available yet commonly neglected resource of the person-to-person type is conversation. Public opinion, which in the long run determines social policy, is in considerable measure formed by the give and take of discussion under the elm on the courthouse lawn, around the stove in the country store, in the chairs of the barber shop, or around a hostess' well-filled dinner table. More people participate daily in such conversations than ever attend public addresses on the same subjects. Personal witness is not a futile gesture; it can be far more effective than many persuasively printed propaganda pieces or high-octane orators.

It is said that Edward A. Steiner once found himself riding in a smoking car with a number of American workmen who were vehemently referring to Italians as "wops" or "dagoes." Steiner proceeded to tell them about some of the great artists, poets, and statesmen who had been Italian. They listened attentively but finally remarked, "The ones we know ain't like that." Thereupon Steiner aptly replied, "As a matter of fact, neither do you gentlemen remind me very much of George Washington or Abraham Lincoln."

The multiplication of the number of people who will on the spot deny false stereotypes expressed about national or racial groups can do much to change popular prejudices, for customary reactions develop to a considerable extent through just such repetitions of myths and rumors. Face-to-face contacts in small primary groups are especially important in transmitting or transforming cultural patterns. In this sense

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even in a day of concentrated control of the media of public opinion formation the people still control the means of democratic decision, if by their energy they are willing to match the expensive microphones or slick-magazine advertising of well-heeled pressure groups.

In addition to the numerous informal conversation contacts constantly available certain planned opportunities for personal verbal interaction are important. It should be possible to develop a technique of personal work for social action akin to that often used in individual evangelism, involving conversation supported by literature, invitations to meetings, and other procedures yet to be discussed. Pastoral calls ought to result in changed social attitudes as well as in the sort of superficial fellowship which results from discussing the weather or the baby's blue eyes. Interviews arranged by individuals or delegations may persuade or activate key persons in the community to use their influence for a desired reform.

The effective use of informal interviews in an intensely critical situation was illustrated in averting a possible race riot in Milwaukee. A young Negro engineering student had moved with his family into a trailer camp previously occupied only by white residents. "As soon as the family appeared in the trailer camp, a group of residents formed an emergency committee to protest their admission, and a racial demonstration exploded. Deputy sheriffs were posted to prevent any outbreak of violence." Another group of residents organized in support of the Negro family.

Members of the local and state commissions on human rights "conferred with representatives of the two groups and explained the laws which guarantee equal rights to all peoples. At the same time, several Milwaukee ministers met with demonstrators of their faiths and urged a Christian outlook on

the racial question." The attorney for the governor's commission on human rights described subsequent events as "a kind of minor miracle." One by one, objectors to the entry of the Negro family came to officials to apologize and to express their regret for the situation that had arisen. "Leaders of the demonstration said they believed that 90 per cent of the camp residents felt different about the issue than they did when it first arose."<sup>2</sup>

2. Closely related to conversation is the use of correspondence for educational purposes. Susan B. Anthony once wrote, "This morning I wrote eight letters to Senators, enclosing petitions, and I forgot to go to lunch." Direct mail advertising firms have no monopoly on this device. Letters to friends can discuss issues of the day. Written communications to community leaders, such as editors or legislators, do exert a significant influence.

The shut-ins of the church might well be enlisted in this sort of apostleship of the pen. Not only would the total number of man hours available for this useful form of community service be considerably multiplied, but a group of people who often suffer from a sense of isolation or insignificance could gain a wholesome feeling of relatedness and vocation.

3. A time-honored strategy for exponents of social change is literature distribution. The tract and pamphlet, the literature rack and circulating library, can still fulfill a function similar to Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*—provided that such literature is well prepared and that enough people can be brought to read it thoughtfully. A flood of propaganda is now

<sup>2</sup> Ellsworth Kalas, "Avert Racial Crisis," *Christian Century*, August 10, 1949, p. 949.



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pouring from printing presses, often colored by the biases of various interests. This plethora of printed pellets from pressure groups must be counterbalanced by an equally effective bombardment of more objective materials from a free press. As the literature in the saddle bags of the early circuit riders played an important part in the Methodist revival, so may the literature table in the narthex help to mobilize an intelligent citizenry on contemporary social issues.

Several principles must be kept in mind to make this technique as effective as possible. For one thing, literature must be wisely selected in terms of the interests and needs of the group concerned. At the same time that it is scholarly and accurate, materials should be written simply and interestingly enough to appeal to manual laborers who are accustomed to handling things and who have had little experience in manipulating word symbols. The popularization of profundities has often been neglected. Interest growing out of current events should be capitalized. This involves frequent changes in the stock of materials displayed. Dust on stacks of leaflets perpetually in the same monotonous array is no invitation to reading. On the other hand, a pamphlet on industrial conflicts offered during an important strike in the community may soon be out of stock.

Literature should be distributed at those strategic times and places which are most conducive to its use. A pamphlet on child training left as part of a pastoral call devoted to that subject is more likely to be read than is one included as an insert in a general mailing on church finance. A timely tract may of course be included in a congregational letter devoted to a related subject. An attractive bulletin board may attract attention not only to announcements of social interest but



also to brief printed statements. A leaflet inserted in the Sunday-morning bulletin reaches the congregation just before the frequently, though unfortunately, idle moments of the organ prelude. Reading it to such a musical background need not interrupt worship. On the contrary it may stimulate meditation as it raises an important problem in the light of God's will.

An illuminating combination of timely local interest, popular presentation, and strategic distribution in the use of literature was worked out a few years ago by the Disciples for Christian Action of the Chicago Pilgrim Fellowship in a campaign against restrictive covenants.

On three different Sundays they distributed hand-bills in the city's Congregational churches, calling for positive action for housing reform in Chicago. One hand-bill pointed out that there are 23 square miles of "blighted areas" in Chicago unfit for living, and that one-fourth of the city's population lives in these areas. Another sheet showed a photograph of a tumble-down house with two Negro children on the porch and had the heading, "Don't Fence Me In." <sup>3</sup>

Various devices may be used to stimulate reading of literature once it is distributed. If the minister uses in the morning sermon a telling illustration from the pamphlet placed in the hands of the congregation, it is less likely simply to be stored by them until the next waste-paper sale. This is a technique profitably used by movie houses in their "preview of coming attractions." A speaker may distribute material as the sort of extension of his remarks which is available to a senator in the *Congressional Record*. He is likely to secure a reading as well

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin R. Andrews, "Church Youth in Social Action," *Social Action*, March 15, 1947, p. 17. Used by permission.

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as a hearing if his original speech was sufficiently compelling. One church has a "book of, the month club," meeting monthly to discuss selected books, but with no one allowed to attend who has not read the book in advance. Introducing resource material when a group is genuinely interested in a particular problem is a basic factor in securing use of such material.

4. To move into the types of group meetings which provide possibilities for social education the first to suggest itself is the regular worship service of the church. Community reconstruction is one among the many concerns of the Christian faith which ought to be undergirded by congregational worship. The soothing comfort of light through stained-glass windows needs to be coupled with the challenge of roaring traffic on the street outside. The personal experience of God's forgiveness and peace must always be supplemented by the social implications of God's judgment and call.

The First Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, has taken seriously the responsibility of a downtown church to minister in all aspects of community relations. For a time it had on its staff a specialized minister of community relations. Among his responsibilities was a seven-minute commentary on a timely social issue as part of each Sunday-morning worship service. For example, after a national coal strike this minister, Fred W. Knickrehm, said, among other things:

Let me go on record as confessing my sin. For years I have read of mine disasters, of the dismal lot of miners and the sins of our industrial society. I preached sermons against them. But I did not become a flaming evangelist. I did not demand that our preaching and the action of the church be one. Perhaps some of you will want to join me on the mourners' bench. If so, First

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church offers you a chance to repent, and to join a crusade to build that Kingdom in which a man is of more value than a mule.<sup>4</sup>

While most churches will probably not wish to introduce a special sermonette on the subject, certainly no worship service is complete unless it relates eternal truth to the contemporary life of man. No year's preaching program is adequate without its proper quota of sermons on social themes. If community transformation is one of the four or five major functions of the church, one would logically expect that something like that proportion of the total annual preaching time would be devoted to subjects in this area. In addition the content of the remainder of the worship service should at some points lift to God community conditions and our obligation concerning them. The church desperately needs an enlarged treasury of hymns, anthems, liturgies, and symbols applying to a greater variety of social issues. Where, for example, is the hymn which relates specifically to juvenile delinquency or labor-management relations, as we do have hymns suitable for an emphasis on world peace or college graduation? Fortunately the Bible is rich in background material, and contemporary writing can often be adapted for use in worship.

5. Another device which has historically proved its worth for arousing the conscience of the community is the forum. Building on the town-meeting tradition, these gatherings in churches and halls throughout the land have provided a platform for a frank discussion of various points of view on controversial issues. Often such a discussion has been available in

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Grant J. Verhulst, "The Church-Concerned About the Community," *The Christian Advocate*, April 24, 1947, p. 14. Used by permission.

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no other way. One of the oldest and most famous of these meetings, the Ford Hall Forum in Boston, was organized under church auspices by the Boston Baptist Social Union. Its purpose is typical: "to aid in the complete development of democracy in America by encouraging the fullest and freest open public discussion of all vital questions affecting human welfare."<sup>5</sup>

The essence of the forum technique is a platform presentation on a timely topic, followed by questions or discussion from the audience. This basic structure has many variations, however. The initial presentation may take the form of a lecture, debate, symposium, or panel discussion. Questions from the floor may be oral, written, or a combination of the two. The former have the advantage of being more dramatic and secure somewhat more involvement on the part of the audience. Written questions, on the other hand, encourage participation by the less extroverted listener and make it easier to control the garrulous "crackpot."

Still another variation is the "multiple-group forum." Under this form the audience is seated around tables in groups of eight to twelve with a discussion leader for each group designated in advance. Or if necessary the audience can be divided into designated sections of adjoining rows with those sitting in certain seats being arbitrarily asked to become the discussion leaders. In either case after the speech a few minutes may be used for questions for clarification. Then about half an hour is given to discussion of the subject in each of the groups with an attempt being made to get the opinion of each person present and to secure some consensus in each group. A brief summary is then made to the entire audience by the

<sup>5</sup> Bernard E. Meland, *The Church and Adult Education* (New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1939), pp. 36-37.



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leader of each group, or in a large gathering by the leaders of sample groups.

Film forums are becoming increasingly popular. These involve the screening of a provocative film, followed by group discussion of the issues raised, possibly with a resource person present to answer questions. A similar procedure can be used with a listening group, meeting to hear a radio forum, such as the University of Chicago Round Table, as a prelude to discussion. Still another variation of the forum idea is the "talk-back service," as used by Leslie Weatherhead and others. During a session following the Sunday preaching service those who wish to remain are encouraged to question the preacher on the theme he has presented. An adult class which meets after the morning service or a midweek meeting is sometimes utilized for this purpose. In any case the procedure is likely to prove beneficial both for the understanding of the congregation and for the quality of future sermons.

Churches have used these various types of forums under widely different circumstances. They may be held on Sundays or during the week, as town meetings, Sunday evening clubs, or church-night dinners. They may be combined with suppers or fellowship periods, with devotional services, musical programs, or classes. An opportunity yet to be fully developed is the radio presentation of church forums. A 1946 study of the Joint Radio Committee of the Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian (U.S.A.) churches found that only 6 of the 140 programs sponsored by local councils of churches were discussion programs. A less stereotyped church radio program can provide a distinctively religious witness on the air waves, supplementing the round tables and town meetings already considering controversial issues from more secular viewpoints. A project which denominations might



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imitate is that of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in its National Citizens' Forum. Regional organizers stimulate the forming of listening groups which with the help of study pamphlets discuss the forum after the broadcast and report their findings. These reactions are digested into a brief report and broadcast the following week over regional networks after the national forum network is broken.

There are a number of values associated with the forum technique. For one thing, the service of experts is readily made available. These may be persons indigenous to the community as well as outsiders. Even in smaller towns such persons are available. A local doctor or a high-school social-studies teacher may have a distinctive contribution to make on public health or on the structure of democracy which has never been utilized by the community. Churches in small towns and large cities can also bring into the area distinguished speakers from outside. Johnson, Vermont, has a village population of about seven hundred, yet its church-sponsored People's Forum has presented leaders like Wilfred Grenfell. The minister of the church writes:

War and peace; how capital and labor can pull together; the place of the Church in today's world—all these we have talked about. Our speakers have come from colleges and our state university, from the British Embassy at Washington, from various parts of our state. We have had doctors, lawyers, senators and governors. . . . Over a period of twelve years we have never lacked speakers.<sup>6</sup>

The leader's expenses are paid through a silver offering, and sometimes an itinerary is arranged making it possible for the

<sup>6</sup> A. Ritchie Low, "A Country Church Can Have a Forum," *The Christian Advocate*, August 10, 1944, pp. 11-12. Used by permission.

distinguished guest to meet several engagements in the vicinity. Near-by educational institutions or, if they are wisely chosen, reform organizations which are anxious to secure a hearing often provide ready sources for speakers.

Another value of this technique is to be found in the fact that forums have become associated with the American ideal of freedom of speech. It is generally recognized that they should provide a free platform for the expression of widely divergent points of view. A subject which might be considered too controversial or a speaker who might be thought too "radical" for use at any other point in the church program can often be presented from a forum platform. The stimulus of widely varying points of view, which is essential to sound social decision, can be brought to large numbers of busy people with a minimum of effort through the public forum.

On the other hand, forums have their limitations. Even though imaginative publicity and properly timed subjects are used, attendance may be disappointing, particularly in situations not accustomed to the procedure. One must be realistic about the matter of numbers, recognizing that a small, selective gathering may nevertheless be highly significant. Furthermore a forum is often no more—and no less—effective than any lecture. Even in some of its modified forms it does not provide as much audience participation as does a class or discussion group. This is no argument against the use of a forum, which does make its distinctive contribution, but it is an argument for supplementing the forum method. This can be done through the distribution of literature or reading lists, and especially through classes integrated into the forum schedule and providing for more intense study and wider participation.

6. This leads directly to a consideration of classes and dis-

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cussion groups as a method of social education. Social group workers and religious educators have discovered the particular efficacy of such small interacting groups in stimulating individual growth. Such groups secure a more complete involvement and active participation by individuals than does a lecture to an audience. As the differing insights of a number of members are brought into creative interplay, one modifying another, a more adequate synthesis or group conclusion is likely to emerge than is available to the individual in the solitude of his study.

Such healthy centers of initiative at the grass roots are important alike for political democracy and for Christian social action. Without them democracy degenerates into bureaucracy and may set out upon the road which leads to dictatorship. Wherever there is an apathetic, supine population, decisions are left to the unchecked vagaries of top officials. Likewise so long as it remains unsupported by an active, participating membership, the social action program of the church tends to become a marginal concern, kept alive only by the occasional flurries of isolated committees or hierarchical functionaries.

Modern urban civilization has in several respects thrown a blighting influence over active discussion within an aroused population. The tempo of the technological process often leaves less time and energy for practicing the craft of citizenship. Not only does the modern machine seem to make a man too old to work at sixty, but it also tends to make him too tired to think at eight o'clock in the evening. The temptation of the worker is to look for high-powered "recreational" thrills instead of discussion groups. Against such odds the call of the church to place first things first becomes increasingly important. The urban emphasis upon specialization and

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division of labor may make us content to assign political decision to officeholders and ecclesiastical policy to ministers and boards. The motto of the membership of the large city church often becomes, "We will pay the bills and listen to the sermons, and leave the work of the church to the employed staff." The revival of the Protestant emphasis upon individual responsibility and the priesthood of all believers is long overdue.

In our urbanized culture we tend to associate in interest groups rather than in neighborhood gatherings. The result is that we most often talk with people who already agree with us. This creates the illusion of unanimity and curtails the creative growth which can take place only through the clash of conflicting opinion. In the village store the banker matched opinions with the plumber, the farmer, and the town socialist. It has been suggested that as "education is best symbolized by Mark Hopkins and a student seated on a log, democracy is best symbolized by political discussion around the cracker barrel."<sup>7</sup> However, the supermarket has replaced the crossroads store, and discussion has retreated into employers' associations, labor unions, and other special interest groups, without cross fertilization. The church is one of the relatively few remaining organizations which in its total membership does cut across lines of class and specialized interest. In the modern social environment society must take thought for reviving centers of discussion at the grass roots. The church has a distinctive opportunity and responsibility here.

The Protestant church also has peculiar resources for raising controversial discussion to the creative level and for avoiding

<sup>7</sup> William E. Utterback, "Political Significance of Group Discussion," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March, 1947, p. 39.



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cleavage. Its emphasis upon the autonomy of the individual believer and the availability of spiritual insight to all men should instill that appreciation of opposing opinion which is essential to growth through the group process. The fellowship of the church is rooted in a common experience and agreement much deeper than the relatively temporary and superficial issues of contemporary life. This makes possible a consideration of controversial issues with less explosive effects. The tie that binds spirits that feel a kinship on the deeper levels of life can withstand the strain of occasional disagreement. Furthermore the church proclaims a gospel which is a continuous call to repentance. Before the churchman stands always an unrealized ideal, the perfect will of God. A lively conviction of the eternal judgment of God should produce an openness to change and a readiness to act upon new convictions which are seldom available in other institutions.

The place for beginning discussion is with problems felt by the group, and the more acutely felt as sensitive minds compare present reality with the demand of God. The program of study groups should always grow out of such needs and mature into action. Whatever the subject of concern may be, from making parish farm land more productive to the effect of tariffs on the peasants of China, or from achieving a happy married life to eliminating international war, the group process is not complete until it has moved beyond verbalization. Study should always be a springboard into other types of action, by the group or by its individual members. Unless there is this further outreach into the community, there is an incomplete justification for the discussion process.

A considerable variety of procedures for setting up study classes is available. One frequently neglected by social action committees is the utilization of already existing groups. It is



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not always necessary to undergo the birth pangs of organizing a new interest group. In the typical church or community an astonishing number of different groups meet during any one month. A most important educational procedure is introducing social concerns into the programs of these already existing groups. If a widespread educational project in race relations is called for, why not enlist youth and adult church-school classes, women's society circles, youth fellowships, men's clubs, and fellowship groups in a comprehensive and united effort? To facilitate this, one New England church set aside a month each fall and another each spring for a church-wide emphasis on a common theme. The minister during that month preached a series of sermons on the selected subject, and every organization in the church was asked to devote its meeting time to an appropriate aspect of the subject.

The possibilities in a community-wide attempt to enlist existing groups are illustrated in a recent "Discussion Unlimited" project in Cleveland. One observer wrote concerning it:

During the past two years Cleveland has held over two thousand "Town Meetings of Greater Cleveland." These forums, panels, or discussions have been held in civic centers, public halls, labor locals, club rooms, homes, libraries, churches and schools. People from every class, creed and race have met together to face specific civil, national, and world problems. They have studied non-partisan outlines prepared "by the best intelligence in the city," read tons of recommended books and pamphlets to spike rumors and expose false propaganda, expressed their opinions freely, and listened to hundreds of Cleveland's leaders and information experts.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Underwood, "Who Changes Cleveland?" *Social Action*, November 15, 1944, p. 31. Used by permission.

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Initiated by Charles F. MacLennan, a Presbyterian minister, and without any available funds, the project enlisted volunteer workers and leaders, and concentrated upon already established groups. Commissions were organized to select topics; study guides were prepared; a training program for discussion leaders was set up. The fact that in one year 325 different groups participated and 1,600 organizations received discussion material testifies to the impact of the project.

It is sometimes desirable, of course, to organize special interest groups for the serious study of a specific problem. One church began its first study circle on world peace with ten couples meeting at the home of the chairman. Ten years later the project still continued with ten such groups of twenty people each meeting monthly to explore the problems of world order. Such groups may meet independently or as a part of a larger program of classes on a variety of subjects meeting for a series of sessions. Family nights, "Universities of Life," "Farmers' Winter-Night Colleges," leadership schools, or church and community institutes offer such possibilities.

Competent leadership can be found for such groups even in the smallest community. School teachers or professional people may be used, but as many church schools or community projects have discovered, the area of potential leadership is even wider than such trained groups. Latent resources are often found in unexpected places. Given a subject of general interest and well-prepared study material, housewives, farmers, or unskilled laborers can become effective study-group leaders.

[On] just a little old common road [in Tennessee] a country store, a schoolhouse, and a few homes appear. Here is Big Lick,

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typical Cumberland Plateau area, where fifty families seek a living from poor soil.... The one social institution in the area is a church. For twenty years it has made a determined effort to help the community develop, first under the guidance of a woman church worker and, since 1934, of a resident minister, the Reverend Eugene Smathers.... He recognized the economic need as basic in an area in which the average cash income had been as low as \$40 a year. Various attempts to improve economic conditions had met with little success until, in 1938, the minister discovered the study club technique.... In the beginning two study clubs were formed. They met at homes of members every Wednesday evening. The minister was there to help and advise but he accepted in spirit and in truth the principle that leadership must come from within the community. Members of the clubs, therefore, were selected to serve as leaders. Each group likewise selected its own subject for study. One decided to explore the possibilities of cattle as a source of increased income, and the other chose cooperative buying of farm supplies.

Out of these study groups grew cooperative associations to purchase and share expensive farm equipment, to supervise a community forest, sawmill, a hammer mill, and a small planing mill, and to manage a homestead plan for young couples on undeveloped land. The county agent said of the project:

"Six months of study in a special agricultural school away from home could not have done the things for many of the farmers in your Big Lick community which they have done for themselves in a year of Study Club."<sup>9</sup>

The use of a similar technique in the Maritime Provinces of Canada has been widely publicized. Using printed materials,

<sup>9</sup> Jean and Jess Ogden, *Small Communities in Action* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), pp. 3-6. Used by permission. Cf. Earle Hitch, *Rebuilding Rural America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), chap. 13.

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radio programs, or films supplied by St. Francis Xavier College, study groups of fishermen, coal miners, and farmers have initiated a movement resulting in 150 co-operative stores, 425 credit unions, a fishermen's co-operative, seven co-operative housing groups, and a hospitalization scheme covering a quarter of a million people.

A useful procedure for stimulating local discussion groups is the use of the speakers' bureau or deputation team. Qualified individuals or trained teams, made available to interested groups, can introduce stimulating resource material and bring a more specialized leadership. Various reform organizations often provide such services. Students or faculty members from a near-by college are also a fruitful source. A larger church can use this device effectively within its own fellowship, training groups of concerned lay persons as specialists in a particular area and rotating them as leaders of various groups. This is a two-edged educational venture, the volunteer leaders growing at least as much as the groups they serve. The use of deputation teams rather than individual leaders often means a greater accomplishment in both respects, for each member of the team reinforces the zeal of the others, and the strengths of some balance the weaknesses of others.

Another stimulus to widespread local discussion is the sort of plebiscite which was taken in Congregational churches on the peace issue in 1935 and on economic questions in 1938. After the use of nationally prepared study materials church groups across the country were asked to ballot on a uniform list of questions in the field being considered. The same procedure can of course be used in a smaller district or in a local church. Anticipation of democratic expression in affecting the results of such a poll can drive a group to its books—or at least to its pamphlets—for more serious study.



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Ordinarily this is the chief value of pronouncements by church bodies on social issues. While such dictums do have some effect on government, the general public, or other bodies toward which they are beamed, their most thoroughgoing consequences are probably to be found within the constituent groups of the body speaking. In so far as possible, pronouncements should grow out of local discussion, and certainly a statement made at the top should always be a fair subject for thoroughgoing consideration, rejection, or endorsement at the bottom. Only the discussing church is the powerfully witnessing church in the community.

Little has been said here about the philosophy or methodology of religious education appropriate to such groups, since this has been amply dealt with elsewhere. Obviously the group product is superior where the best technique of discussion leadership has been used. The more usual methods ought also to be supplemented at suitable points by the use of audio-visual aids, exhibits, workshops, or sociodrama.<sup>10</sup> One good movie may be worth a dozen speeches if it is integrated as one element in a total learning experience. Actually working on a project in a workshop session moves participants closer to action than much verbalization. The church committee responsible for community action ought to be acquainted with some of the better bibliographical materials available in all these areas.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For an introduction to this recently popular method of role playing or sociodrama see Malcolm S. Knowles, *Informal Adult Education* (New York: Association Press, 1950), pp. 78-83.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, H. S. Elliott, *The Process of Group Thinking* (New York: Association Press, 1928); J. Jeffery Auer and Henry L. Ewbank, *Handbook for Discussion Leaders* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947); or Bruno Lasker, *Democracy Through Discussion* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1949).



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7. Closely related to classes or discussion groups as a method of social education are conferences or institutes. They are ordinarily of briefer duration than a class study project, involving fewer sessions concentrated into a shorter time span. Often also they include a wider variety of activities—forums, discussion groups, recreation, worship—built around a central theme.

Following more or less traditional forms, conferences on a great variety of subjects blanket the country on any single day, bringing prosperity to hotel owners and new stimulus to all sorts of movements, creative, exploitative, and innocuous. Conference going may become the favorite indoor sport of professional churchmen or social reformers, threatening occasionally to become an escape from a more direct attack on community evils. For the generality of men, who are less plagued with invitations to confer collectively, conferences can play an extremely valuable role in social education.

Annual conventions have often breathed new life into faltering causes. Youth institutes or camps have changed attitudes in many different areas. The Quaker institutes on international relations have done likewise in their area of specialization. Labor Day week-end institutes for married couples have provided opportunity for training in Christian family life. Week-end or single-evening "good will conferences" have brought together for frank and friendly discussion groups otherwise in conflict in the community. Pioneered by James Myers of the Federal Council of Churches, such sessions have included employers, labor unionists, farmers, and members of minority races and religions. With the understanding that there will be no publicity, no resolutions, no new organization, no contributions asked, and no literature distributed, but that there will be much open and brotherly exploration, critical

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situations have often been relieved and creative insights born. Coming into their own also are conferences restricted to members of a single occupation or profession, facing seriously the question of what changes a Christian allegiance would make in the usual pattern of life, for example, of the teacher, the doctor, the union official, or the corporation executive.

The annual Stay-at-Home Conference sponsored by the interdenominational Christian Youth Association of Kingsport, Tennessee, has illustrated in a remarkable way how such sessions can become springboards to community action. The conference pattern is familiar enough. An out-of-town speaker is brought in for a week of evening addresses; these are followed by discussion groups under local leadership. The consequences of the meetings have been more startling. The conference in its first year resulted in a study of living conditions among Negroes in the community, which when presented to city officials became an important stimulus to the building of a low-rent housing project. As a result of its meetings the C.Y.A. also established a day nursery which was later taken over by the school board, and moved the library board to establish a branch library for Negroes. A Leisure-Time Conference resulted in a weekly game night for young people, which grew into a community play night sponsored by the City Recreation Department.<sup>12</sup>

A new emphasis in conferences is to include in the schedule workshop or action groups as well as the more traditional talk sessions. A peace institute may spend an afternoon in house-to-house canvassing or literature distribution. A conference on race relations may interview employers or restaurant owners in an attempt to change their discriminatory policies. A youth

<sup>12</sup> Ogden, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-75.

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caravan in a week's stay in a community may initiate a world-affairs broadcast or begin building a playground for pre-delinquents. These procedures have the same advantages as do laboratory schools in religious education. Actual experience is the best teacher; the most compelling insights come through participation.

One variant of this basic idea is the work camp in either its summer-long or week-end form. Often paying their own expenses for the privilege of serving, small groups of young people or adults have moved into situations of tension and need for a program of shared worship, study, recreation, and manual labor. The last as a major ingredient may include anything from painting a mission church or supervising a playground to building new schoolrooms or reconstructing a battlefield. The philosophy behind work camps includes the conviction that by a wider sharing of the common life bridges of understanding may be thrown across the chasms of contemporary culture. These seed groups attempt to demonstrate in microcosm the power of love that can hold together a disintegrating world. A work camp not only leaves a physical contribution in the community, but develops a reciprocal spiritual contribution in both local citizens and campers. As one participant in a week-end work camp put it, "I came away all full of paint and ideals." Because of these possible values in a conference emphasizing either physical labor or social service, such a supervised work experience in a small group might well be considered a graduate course normally expected of youth and adults beyond the undergraduate level of the more traditional discussion-oriented institute.

8. Deserving separate mention in its own right is the field trip. The first awakening of social sensitivity has often come through direct contact with the squalor and pain of our time.

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As Jane Addams or Muriel Lester became apostles to the poor after seeing at firsthand the condition of men in East London, so many a modern churchman has been shocked into concern by an observation trip which dramatically illustrated a contemporary community problem. A tour of the average small county jail is likely to arouse enthusiasm for prison reform as few other experiences can. Direct observation of the housing conditions of Negro families may well transform a previous intellectual interest into a burning passion. Creative imagination is not enough for the average suburbanite who lives his comfortable sheltered life far removed from the cruel realities constantly faced by many of his brothers.

Not only problems but also possible solutions may come alive through field study. A visit to a public housing project or a minimum security correctional institution may remove many misconceptions and change basic attitudes. "Parrandas," or a sort of progressive party involving visits to homes of contrasting races and cultures, have demonstrated the possibilities of brotherhood to participating young people in New York City.<sup>13</sup> A trip by city young people to a rural church, by white churchmen to a Negro congregation, by college students to a labor-union meeting, may prepare the way for closer co-operation in common action.

Increasing numbers under church auspices are being given the opportunity of observation trips to foreign countries or of traveling seminars to other parts of the United States. While the number of participants in such ventures is necessarily limited, every churchman can have access to similar local opportunities. The counterpart of the reconciliation tours which have become widely known in New York City is also

<sup>13</sup> Rachel DuBois, *Neighbors in Action* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), chap. 3.



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available in Podunk Center. Any alert council of churches or local church social action committee can arrange trips to a chamber of commerce, a factory typical to the area, a labor headquarters, jails or courts, zones of substandard housing, neighborhoods occupied by minority groups, a functioning co-operative, or a wide variety of other indigenous though often unobserved activities.

In any case there should be adequate advance preparation for the trip, including a preliminary interpretation of the problem and of the chief items to look for. Wherever possible someone who knows the situation well should be used as a resource leader, or on-the-spot interviews should be held with capable representatives of the groups visited. Following the trip opportunity should be provided for full discussion and a more exhaustive study of the problem presented as well as for some outlet into constructive action of whatever enthusiasm has been generated.

9. A third group of educational techniques, definitely directly beyond the immediate fellowship of the church, is that of public appeals through the chief channels of mass communication. One of the most important of these is the newspaper. Every day 52,000,000 Americans buy a daily paper and presumably share it with their families. For many of them this newspaper plus the car cards and billboards constitute their only reading material for the day. To all too great an extent the social philosophy of the American people is formed by the headlines and by the sayings of Little Orphan Annie. The procedure is not always objective, and the consequences are not always wholesome. American journalism has too great a vested interest in disaster, finding it profitable to amplify the spectacular in order to boost circulation. Or editors may slant news reports in order to fit preconceived

theories, sometimes chosen because of the compatibility of the theory with the convictions of leading advertisers or with the prevailing national hysteria. Amplifying this theme of biased reporting, a recent writer paraphrased the slogan of the *New York Times*, "All the News That's Fit to Print," and entitled his article "All the News That Fits the Pattern."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that the vast influence of the press is often exerted in dangerous directions makes it unusually important that the church with a community concern pay serious attention to this medium of mass communication. At least four courses of action are open to the church. In the first place a friendly educational approach to the editor or to popular columnists may sufficiently win their interest that on their own initiative they will run materials desired by church groups. For example, the ministers of Hartford, Connecticut, troubled by developing war hysteria in 1948, which they felt to be abetted by distortions in news reporting, invited the editors of local papers to a meeting at which the ministers expressed their concern and a fruitful exchange of ideas followed. Effective action may result if newspapers can be brought to use their own resources in preparing a series of feature articles or in campaigning editorially on a community abuse, such as conditions in mental hospitals or corruption in government.

A second approach to newspapers is through the submission for publication of material prepared by church sources. This may be especially fruitful in the case of rural weeklies, neighborhood papers, or labor and minority group publications. Often the pressure on the columns of such papers is not so great, and editors are anxious for newsworthy material. This can be illustrated from an instance of public service rendered by the county weekly in Rabun County, Georgia.

<sup>14</sup> Fred M. Hechinger, *Harpers Magazine*, May, 1949.

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In the winter of 1943 when the school hot-lunch program was threatened because of the loss of W.P.A. help, the Health and Welfare Council put on a spectacular newspaper campaign. The cooperation of the editor was enlisted in a special "School Hot Lunch Project Issue." Then members of the council went to work to get material for the special issue. So well did they do the job that when the planned eight pages were full, the editor found it necessary to write an explanation and apology under the heading, "Snowed Under." In part it said: "With all the experience that I have had in newspapering I have never seen so much copy in for one paper. Surely someone must have touched a nerve center. Honestly I had not believed it possible to create so much interest in any one subject as has been created in this lunch room business." ... And, of course, the county kept its hot-lunch program with all agencies cooperating as never before.<sup>15</sup>

Large city dailies, on the other hand, are more likely to fit the comment that "the only publicity agent welcome in a newspaper office is the one whose client looks well in a bathing suit—and then only if he brings her along."<sup>16</sup> Even such competition, however, is not too great for the alert church group if it follows certain basic principles in preparing press releases. Above all, items must be newsworthy. In this category may be placed special events or projects of community interest, statements by prominent leaders, actions on currently controversial issues, or human-interest pictures or feature stories. Church leaders should cultivate contacts with the appropriate editors and follow their instructions regarding deadlines and form of releases. The story should be written

<sup>15</sup> Ogden, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>16</sup> R. J. Travers, "A City Editor Looks at Organizational Publicity," in *Manual of Practical Political Action*, eds. L. C. Frank and R. E. Shikes (New York: National Citizens Political Action Committee).

simply and factually without editorializing adjectives. The most important facts should be put at the beginning, and the entire story needs to be kept as brief as possible. The name of the organization or individual submitting the item should be noted for purposes of any checking the paper may desire. Accuracy is always essential; an embarrassed editor may ruin a press contact.

Whatever entree one may gain into news columns can be supplemented—and sometimes enlarged—by the purchase of advertising space. Church advertising ideally ought to do more than announce next Sunday's sermon topic. It can also be used to stress the community interest or contribution of the church. A congregation with a community program has a service to all age groups which it has at least as much right to advertise as does the purveyor of cosmetics or refrigerators. There may be occasions upon which the church ought to present its message of reconciliation and reconstruction in the same way as do the full-page advertisements of management or labor when locked in private combat. During the crucial 1951 national debate on foreign policy several religious groups, including the First Methodist Church of Evanston and the American Friends Service Committee, adopted this strategy, making a constructive and influential contribution through full-page advertisements in Washington or other metropolitan newspapers.

A final resort in breaking into newsprint is the "Letters to the Editor" column. In addition to the influence which a barrage of such letters may have on the policy of the paper those published provide a vehicle for reaching a certain number of readers with a point of view which may otherwise not be available to them. Data which may not have broken through the paper curtain of censorship imposed as editors select the



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content of their columns can sometimes emerge into print through this town meeting of the newspaper world. Such letters should of course be factual rather than hysterical, courteous instead of caustic, and above all brief. Since column space is a precious item, especially in city dailies, it is better to use one's own judgment in condensation than to force the editor to use his indiscriminate blue pencil—or wastebasket. If at first one's letter is not published, he should try and try again. In addition to local papers metropolitan papers in near-by cities, religious journals, or news magazines should not be neglected.

10. Another important instrument for molding the mass mind is to be found in the commercial movies. Rows of citizens seated before the movie projectors of America are not only projecting their desires, escaping their frustrations, and recreating their wearied minds. They are also changing their attitudes in response to the subtle suggestion of the screen.

Even more than is true in the publishing of newspapers, the production of commercial motion pictures is highly centralized. There is not an important movie lot in every large city. The local church will find it most difficult, therefore, to utilize this medium of popular education. The social-action committee may produce movies or slides on local problems as an effective part of the visual education program of the congregation, but these will not ordinarily be shown in the neighborhood movie palace. The local church can, however, undertake a twofold program with respect to commercial motion pictures, exerting such influence as it can on Hollywood and on local exhibitors. The use of economic pressure in this connection has been discussed in the preceding chapter. The purely educational approach referred to here will involve written communications and personal conferences.

The local church can by resolutions or letters make such an approach to movie producers, seeking the production of wholesome material in important themes. An even more effective approach can be made by national religious bodies on an ecumenical or interfaith basis. Increasingly effective efforts in this direction deserve the support of local churches everywhere. Many good things have come out of Hollywood, and those there who take seriously their vocation of public education should be made to feel the support and guidance of the church.

Local congregations have an indispensable role to play in winning the allegiance of exhibitors in their communities to a code of decent practices. The owner of the local theater, in so far as he exercises a choice of movies to run, is as important a community leader as is the newspaper editor or radio-station manager. He ought to be won to an attitude of social responsibility and to a recognition of his stewardship under God. In one California community all the ministers in town called in a body on the local theater manager. They reported a noticeable improvement in the movie diet subsequently offered. In another town churchwomen in co-operation with the Parent Teachers Association approached a movie manager who had been having trouble with the conduct of youngsters at his Saturday children's show. They offered to supply volunteers to help keep order if the manager would accept their help in choosing a better bill of coming attractions.

11. Another method for winning the loyalty of men to the Christian way in community relationships is to gain the ear and eye of the multitude through radio and television. The family seated before the receiving set in its living room is being educated just as truly and often more effectively than the audience at a lecture or the attendants at a church-school

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class. The church through radio and television can "conduct a ministry to public opinion."<sup>17</sup> This vehicle can immeasurably widen the scope of influence of religious groups. Over 90 per cent of the families in the United States have radio receiving sets. Peter speaking to the crowds at Pentecost, Paul on Mars Hill, or Wesley in his field preaching reached nothing like the number of hearers available to a twentieth-century disciple standing before a microphone. More people may listen to a single network broadcast than many ministers reach in a lifetime. In the radio audience, furthermore, are found many who never enter the door of the church, but who will listen to a religious message while remaining in their own easy chairs. While, to be sure, radio is weak in intimacy of association, group interaction, and sustained contact, it offers real gains in the extensiveness of potential impact and in the peculiar possibilities of this art form.

Here too the church, acting especially through interdenominational agencies, can seek to influence the policies of radio broadcasters in general. It can often also secure the inclusion of material in which it is interested on programs sponsored by others, including commercial firms or network commentators. In addition the church can present its own programs over local stations or national networks as spot announcements or full-length "shows" under commercial or sustaining time. Radio in the United States is a privately owned public utility under government regulation which requires operation in the public interest. Since providing for the interests of organized religion

<sup>17</sup> Everett C. Parker, Elinor Inman, and Ross Snyder, *Religious Radio, What to Do and How* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), p. ix. This comprehensive manual offers an abundance of suggestions and ought to be consulted by all those interested in the practical aspects of presenting religious broadcasts.

is typically considered part of the public service to be rendered by broadcasters, the church has a peculiar opportunity in radio.

This opportunity has not always been utilized to strengthen the community witness of the church. Too often religious radio programs are confined to personal devotional periods, worship services, or sermons on general themes. Valuable as these are, the social witness of the gospel is frequently underemphasized. There are too few programs of the character of the "My Brother" series on race relations broadcast during the winter of 1945-46 over the West Coast network of the Columbia Broadcasting System under the sponsorship of the Councils of Churches of California, Oregon, and Washington. With a C.B.S. news analyst acting as master of ceremonies, dramatic presentations were arranged on such acute tension areas as problems of Christian-Jewish relationships, the struggle of minorities to find housing or employment, and racial prejudice within local churches. An interracial choir provided music. A theme song, "My Brother's Blood Is Mine," was specially composed. Distinguished participants included Governor Earl Warren, Dr. Robert Millikan, and Thomas Mann.<sup>18</sup>

More consistent with the resources of the average local church is the "World Peace and You" series presented by the Wesley Foundation of Memphis State College over station WDIA. In co-operation with the speech department of the college four programs were outlined and "sold" to the manager of the local station. They included symposia and round-table discussion involving both students and citizens of the community. Not only did the groups preparing the broadcasts deepen their own concern, but there was a noticeable increase

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-13.



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in interest in international problems in sections of the listening audience.<sup>19</sup>

Programs bringing a religious dimension to community interests can often be more effectively presented as town-meeting or round-table discussions, or in dramatic form, thus departing from the speech or sermon which is the prevailing stereotype in religious radio. To be effective any presentation over the air must be attractive enough to hold an audience. While the number of potential radio listeners is tremendous, each member of that invisible congregation is tenuously attached. He can withdraw from a program by the turn of a dial without the discourtesy of walking out of a meeting. The radio listener is under no pressure to tolerate mediocrity or dullness for the sake of good manners. Some studies have shown that on devotional religious programs the audience turns over from three to five times in a thirty-minute period.<sup>20</sup> To compete with Fibber McGee and Jack Benny, religious programs must be good radio as well as sound Christianity.

12. The community education resources of the public library are not to be neglected. In an age of headlines, comic books, and pictorial magazines libraries may not reach the masses to the same extent as do the media just discussed; yet their constituency is sizable and significant. The first problem is to get onto library shelves books and periodicals which relate religious values to the acute problems of both the local and larger communities. Particularly in smaller communities where budgets are limited there may be glaring gaps in this section. Often a request from a church group which is alert to new publications is sufficient to secure materials. At other

<sup>19</sup> Ray Allen, "World Peace and You," *motive*, October, 1949, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Parker, Inman, and Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

times gifts are in order to supplement inadequate library resources.

A book on the shelf is not yet a book read. The next step is interesting people in serious reading on important problems. Libraries are usually willing to arrange exhibits of books to meet special needs, such as during Brotherhood Week or in connection with a campaign of the community co-ordinating council. Often libraries will compile and distribute selected bibliographies on timely subjects. Churches can reciprocate by calling attention to materials available at the library. If community projects are to succeed, they must be based upon sound study of all available data. This requires making communities increasingly book conscious.

One possible procedure combining the resources of newspaper and library was illustrated in a rural county in Georgia. A few people were concerned about getting the citizens of the area to think about the requirements for durable peace.

How to direct the thoughts of all citizens toward planning, how to get to them the necessary information about world problems, how to get them excited about having a share in the peace as well as in the war, they accepted as their special problem.

The county ordinary had the idea of a book-review page devoted to books on world problems. The editor was willing to publish the reviews. All books for review were selected from the county library or were immediately placed there so that anyone whose interest was caught could get and read the book. Citizens were asked to write the reviews. Each one was signed. This accomplished several things at once. First, a large number of influential citizens were becoming interested in the postwar world because they had been asked to read books and write reviews. Second, the opinion was given weight with local people because

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someone they knew and respected had signed his name to it.

In August, 1943, two full pages of such reviews appeared. . . . In September, ten more books on war and peace were reviewed. For October, ten books on Russia were selected; for November, ten on China; for December, ten on India. If only the reviewers had read the books, at least fifty people in Rabun County had been stimulated to think seriously about the postwar world. The librarian claims, however, that a real demand was created by the reviews that showed immediate results in circulation.<sup>21</sup>

13. A last means of approaching the community in mass is through exhibits and demonstrations. In the first category posters have had a long and on the whole honorable place in the history of social agitation. Without descending to the banalities and insults to the popular intelligence which politicians often flaunt from billboards at election time, churchmen can also popularize their publicity. Certainly a picture of an emaciated child on placards in downtown windows can stimulate contributions to community collections for overseas relief. Bulletin boards outside of churches ought to advertise more than worship services or institutional concerns, such as bazaars, or pious generalities in selected "religious" mottoes. Should they not with equal appropriateness carry brief excerpts from the social pronouncements of the denomination or exhortations to register and vote as a Christian duty? Vacant stores or the show windows of co-operative merchants or space at the county fair provide opportunities for more pretentious displays. Well-planned exhibits can bring home to people unused to reading books the essentials of adequate diet, the losses of soil erosion, the effects of alcohol, the causes of delinquency, or the path to peace.

<sup>21</sup> Ogden, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-97.

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While churchmen have typically been reluctant to participate, there is sometimes a place for public demonstrations such as poster walks, parades, or mass meetings. Occasional communities have felt that some other things were as important as increasing attendance at the circus and have held well-organized peace parades. Concerned churchmen have sometimes carried signs at the entrance to an objectionable movie or have distributed handbills presenting a rebuttal to the nationalistic or racialistic message of the film. In some situations such tactics would antagonize more observers than they would win. Under other conditions these devices are at least as fruitful as the street-corner political meeting or Salvation Army band. Here is an occasion for being "wise as serpents" as well as "harmless as doves."

Action that is dramatic as well as decent can make a strong community impact. In one community public reticence was a major obstacle to a campaign to X-ray the population for tuberculosis and to test for venereal disease. Attitudes changed when the ministerial association went in a body for the examination and had their pictures put in the newspaper. After adequate preparation the demonstrations associated with nonviolent direct action can be effective for Christians in America as they were for Gandhi in India. Frequently this involves the public practice of an action a group considers to be right even under difficult circumstances which may lead to suffering. What the full possibilities of this method may be is an intriguing question yet to be completely answered by the experiments of Christian groups.<sup>22</sup>

As a part of its campaign to save O.P.A., members of the American Veterans Committee displayed mothers and children

<sup>22</sup> For one such set of experiments see George M. Houser, *Erasing the Color Line* (New York: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1945).



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housed in tents or sold apples on street corners as a reminder of depression days, at the same time that they passed out their literature. Whether or not churchmen are ready to adopt the same position or strategy, they ought to cultivate similar imagination and initiative in devising appropriate methods on issues of concern to them. Most lay people go through church and church school talking, singing, praying, and occasionally passing out hymnals or contributing to a special offering, but never once participating wholeheartedly in a community action project. It is no wonder that the Christian life seems considerably more dull and less related to contemporary reality than it ought to be. Active participation by church members in effective educational procedures, be they traditional or novel, is essential if we are to redeem either the church members or the community.

## CHAPTER VII

### POLITICAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHURCHMEN

WHETHER we like it or not, the future of the world is being increasingly determined through political channels. Yet political activity is an area much neglected by both churches and individual churchmen. In the combination of facts described in those two statements may lie defeat for the Christian cause in the modern world.

The words of Mark Hanna, originally spoken to Wayne B. Wheeler, still apply to contemporary churchmen. "Young man," said he, "your kind of people are all right in a prayer meeting, but they're no good at a caucus."<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastical bodies may vote pious resolutions, but the machine knows it is votes that count and not sonorous statements. Because they are neophytes in the great game of politics, the whispers of churchmen are often overwhelmed by the selfish shouts of interest groups. Many well-intentioned religionists still vote for candidates simply because they do not drink or smoke, regardless of their position on fundamental issues of the day. On this basis there were German churchmen who supported Hitler! A few members of churches in mastering their political lessons have gone as far as "write your Congressman." Yet this is only the nursery-school stage of political strategy. There is a vast amount to learn beyond that. As long as we remain inert or inept, we shall be politically powerless. Our amateur awkwardness is a continuous guarantee of failure in

<sup>1</sup> D. C. Macintosh, *Social Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), pp. 310-11.

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competition with the well-oiled machinations of the professional politician.

A number of reasons can be found for this neglect of action in the political sphere. One of the most influential is the widespread feeling that politics is a dirty business and that all those who enter it must be tarred by the same brush. Having constructed a stereotype of the "crooked politician," we proceed to impute guilt by association to all those who draw near to the political arena. Politics therefore comes to be considered a game which is not quite cricket for the polite gentleman or the practicing Christian. One national poll asking, "Would you be willing to have your son enter politics?" found 67 per cent of the people responding that they would not. To a second question, "Do you believe a man can go into politics and remain honest?" 50 per cent answered in the negative.<sup>2</sup>

Several observations ought to be made to those who hold this common American conviction. In the first place, the term "politics" refers to the functioning of our total system of government. To hold it in inevitable ill repute is to question our procedures for the management of public affairs. He who at one and the same time lauds democracy and looks askance at politics suffers from a subtle schizophrenia. The cure for this disorder is the recognition of the creative possibilities of politics. As William E. Hocking has pointed out, "The politician is the man who deliberately faces both the certainty that men must live together, and the endless uncertainty on what terms they can live together, and who takes upon himself the task of proposing the terms, and so of transforming the

<sup>2</sup> Arthur T. Vanderbilt, "Better Minds for Better Politics," *New York Times Magazine*, March 9, 1947, p. 10.

unsuccessful human group into the successful group.”<sup>3</sup> The politician may become the statesman, making an indispensable contribution to the good society.

Politics does not necessarily corrupt; it is the misuse of political power which corrupts. To be sure, serious corruption frequently occurs, but it is not inevitable. We dare not underestimate the power of God released through regenerate men in transforming existing situations instead of conforming to them. “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Matt. 9:12 R.S.V.). Whatever corruption may exist in political life is actually an argument for Christian participation. The more corrupt our processes of government become, the greater need there is for an influx of idealists.

A second and closely related reason for reluctance to act in this area is the fear of compromise. In a world of imperfections social policy involves repeated choices between relative values. That which is practically possible in political life often falls seriously short of the absolute ideal to which the Christian gives allegiance. The legislator, for example, who favors federal aid to education but opposes government aid to parochial schools may be forced either to vote for a bill providing federal aid including possible services to parochial schools or to get no federal aid at all. It is in this sense that politics is the art of compromise, or as Lord Morley more colorfully put it, “Politics is a field where action is one long second-best, and where the choice constantly lies between two blunders.” This characteristic may modify the political activities of the church as an institution. The respects in which this is true will be considered later. This characteristic of politics certainly does not, however, excuse churchmen in their individual capacities from full participation. Economic life also necessitates a fre-

<sup>3</sup> *Man and the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), p. 13.



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quent choice between relative values. Christian laymen do not therefore abstain from business. There is compromise involved in remaining alive in this present imperfect world. Christians do not as a group thereby become conscientious objectors to life. The idealist is always called upon to do battle for the best possible in an arena of limited choices. To refuse to do so is an even more serious surrender of his ideals. Ordinarily a withdrawal from politics is itself a greater compromise than is conscientious participation.

A third reason for ecclesiastical inaction politically grows out of a misunderstanding of the role of the church. It is widely held that there is something about the nature and function of the church which forbids political activity. It may be thought proper for the church to sponsor pie socials, to sell housewares and greeting cards, to publish books, or to operate industries for handicapped people—yet on the political front action is forbidden. The church is allowed to make pronouncements regarding bingo games, Hollywood divorces, or even wages and working hours; but as soon as one of these becomes a political issue, it becomes for many people forbidden territory. Such a compartmentalization is a denial of the claim of religion to erect standards for all of life. The political arena is no more exempt from the judgment of God than is the economic, the familial, or the personal. The ministry of the church cannot be limited by such artificial boundaries. As will be pointed out later, the distinctive function of the church does define the type of action organized religion may take, but it does not exclude the church from the political sphere.

A fourth fear impeding such action is the dread of splitting the church. Politics involves partisan activities. In many communities emotional loyalties and prejudices are more deep-

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seated on these matters than on any other. The sagacity and skill of the religious educator may here meet its severest test. The democratic group process can, however, withstand the strain. Christian fellowship on more fundamental matters can continue to bind together a group which differs in its political judgments. In avoiding controversial issues the church may be side-stepping precisely the matters which are most important in shaping the future. The possibility of disagreement and conflict within the church becomes an invitation to greater proficiency in the methodology of discussion rather than an excuse for the omission of political questions from the content of our curriculum.

A fifth cause of political apathy is a frequent feeling of frustration in the face of the extreme difficulties involved. The structure of modern government is exceedingly intricate, and the issues requiring political decision are extraordinarily complex. The active citizen of the modern state requires data gathered from Iran, Pakistan, Poland, or Argentina. He must develop an informed opinion concerning the control of atomic energy or of inflation, and the provision of fair employment opportunities for Negroes or parking meters on Main Street. He ought to understand the role of ward heelers and party bosses, of committee hearings and filibusters, of economic blocs and citizens' committees. Furthermore the power of entrenched machines or the corruption accompanying their operation is often so great as to deter all but the hardiest reformers. Sometimes the crusader faces dangerous retaliation. He may find his tax assessment raised or building regulations meticulously enforced on his premises. He risks betrayal, frame-ups, and disgrace. When profitably entrenched interests are threatened by anything more effective than the

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usual sermons or resolutions, they do not lack the means of unscrupulous self-defense.

For the true man of religion such difficulties are never a reason for surrender. Rather do they become an incentive for more vigorous attack. The stronger the opposition may be, the greater is the need for a modern revelation of the spirit of him who "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." The complexity of modern issues demands more adequate skills. Frustration must be turned into the experience of victory.

Not only are the reasons usually given for the neglect of political activity fallacious, but there are strong considerations which make such action imperative. For one thing basic social decisions in our world are increasingly being made through political channels. Whether or not it is desirable, the descriptive fact is that the political institution in our society has taken over ever more numerous functions. The number of babies who die of malnutrition, the juvenile delinquency rate in the slums, the length of casualty lists in war—all depend in a major way upon political policy. We shall not achieve racial justice, world peace, or permanent prosperity unless the proper political decision is made. Future history depends in a major way on present politics. In all these matters important moral issues are involved. The churchman dare not wash his hands of them. Political life today is a crucial battlefield between the forces of love and indifference, of justice and exploitation. For these reasons, as J. H. Oldham has pointed out, "a recall to religion must necessarily mean a recall to politics."

Furthermore, Christianity has a stake in the survival and strengthening of democracy. Political freedoms are an essential element in a social order which releases the full potentialities of personality. Yet these freedoms depend upon individual

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and group participation. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance, not only against the inroads of privileged persons or totalitarian tyrants, but also against the decay of social responsibility and the appearance of that apathy which makes majority decision impossible. In a democracy political participation is not an optional elective for either individuals or voluntary groups. It is rather the food which sustains the life of freedom.

Other groups, often less idealistically motivated, are exceedingly active in affairs of state. Those with a selfish interest to defend are sure to vote. They are not kept home by the rain or a visit from Aunt Jane. Inactivity by enlightened churchmen becomes a support for existing evil and an invitation to corruption. Such corruption often then becomes an excuse for a more complete withdrawal from political life, which allows still greater corruption. Thus we become implicated in a vicious circle spiraling downward toward community disaster. As Plato long ago said, "The penalty that good people pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." If churchmen do not have a determinative influence in community government, gamblers and their ilk will control affairs.

Still another reason for encouraging political activity by church members is that it is necessary to complete an adequate program of religious education. If one of our goals is to nurture men of social concern, willing to accept community responsibility as good citizens, and if education is not complete without expression in action, then no church has done an acceptable job of religious education until large numbers of its laymen are active in this basically important area of community life. In the modern world it is irresponsible to pray, "Thy kingdom come," and to remain a total abstainer from



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political activity. It is morally dangerous to criticize evil from the Olympian heights of the Sunday classroom without enlisting in a Monday-morning campaign for righteousness. Pericles in his great funeral oration reported by Thucydides said of Athens, "We differ from other states in regarding the man who holds aloof from public life not as 'quiet' but as useless."<sup>4</sup> The Christian church should regard a layman who is politically indifferent not as typically pious but as insufficiently regenerate.

With the suggestion of these compelling reasons for participation in political affairs there still remains the question of the type of activity appropriate to the church, the individual layman, and the minister. It is widely held that there should be a difference of function among these three. What, if anything, should this difference be? In the last century General Grant once observed, "In the United States there are three great political parties: the Republican, the Democratic, and the Methodist Church." Is this to be construed as complimentary or denunciatory to the denomination? Father Taylor during an exciting election campaign once prayed, "O Lord, give us good men to rule over us, pure men who fear Thee, righteous men, temperate men, who—pshaw, Lord, what's the use of veering and hauling and boxing around the compass? Give us George N. Biggs for governor." Was such a prayer a misuse of the pulpit? During recent years in some parts of Europe, "Christian" political parties have been organized. Is this proper? Those who have participated in them have faced some troublesome questions, such as, Should Bible passages or pictures of Christ appear on political posters?

What is the proper political function of the church as an

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, 4th ed.), p. 204.

institution? There are three major possibilities for its action. The church might enunciate general principles, endorse specific measures, or support individual candidates or political parties. In deciding which of these are appropriate two principles should be kept in mind. First, a certain specificity is necessary for effective education and action. Merely to say "love" to a child does not make it clear how he is to act when he holds one bar of candy with two children anxious to eat it. If the church confines itself merely to general principles, it may stimulate lay action; but as an organized body it remains relatively innocuous in the day-to-day decisions from which history is compounded.

A second and seemingly contradictory principle grows out of a distinctive function of the church which is shared to the same extent by no other social institution. The church must always bear witness to an ideal of perfection, to the will of God. It exists to bring judgment to bear on every evil in man or society. The Christian ethic is always both relevant as a goal and transcendent over contemporary human policies. The church cannot identify itself with the serious compromises of contemporary life without endangering its reason for existence. When the church comes to condone the relativities inherent in sinful society, it merely duplicates the work of other agencies which operate in that context. The church has a higher purpose to which it must remain loyal. "Let the church be the church" is a slogan which has often been used to express this insight.

For this latter reason the leadership of Protestantism in the United States has to a considerable extent concluded that the church as an organized body can never endorse war. No matter how noble the aims of a particular conflict may be and regardless of what the duty of the individual churchman may

require, the means used in warfare are always so evil as to remain under judgment by any institution which exists to be the conscience of society at every point of imperfection. For the same reason the church can ordinarily never endorse political candidates or parties. Until such time as the Angel Gabriel is running on the Kingdom of God ticket, issues will always be seriously scrambled in the positions of candidates or the platforms of parties. They may be reasonably right on some issues but thoroughly benighted on others. Or their position may be beyond criticism, while their motivation or character may not be completely trustworthy. The Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches took a wise position when it advised, "The church as such should not be identified with any political party, and it must not act as though it were itself a political party. In general, the formation of such parties is hazardous because they easily confuse Christianity with the inherent compromises of politics."<sup>5</sup> No checkered political program is identical with the absolute will of God. The picture of Christ can never appear on the average campaign poster.

The church ought, however, to take a position on concrete measures or proposals (including specific issues, ballot propositions, or legislative bills) which involve no serious compromise. To be sure, this attempted balance between the principles of specificity and perfection involves an elastic criterion, as all distinctions of this sort must do. Some compromise is inevitably involved as soon as one speaks in terms of human alternatives. No choice created by man is perfect in comparison with the ultimate will of God. There may very well be disagreement about the point at which "serious" com-

<sup>5</sup> *Man's Disorder and God's Design* (New York: Harper & Brothers), III, 196.

promise begins. There are always borderline cases in a distinction of this sort. Yet this principle remains a useful one. It would lead the church to draw the line of its participation at some point within the category of specific measures. In some concrete proposals the issues involved are clearly and markedly mixed. The church as such can take no stand on such a proposal; it ought then speak only on the issues involved. In the illustration used above, the church cannot endorse a bill which provides for federal aid to parochial schools. In such an instance it must, if this is its conviction, reiterate its support of federal aid to public schools and its opposition to aid to parochial schools. In other cases the issue presented will be clearer. Where there are no significant imperfections apparent to the properly representative body of its leadership, the church has both the right and the obligation to become specific enough to support, for example, a particular Congressional bill. In the words of the 1947 National Study Conference on the Church and Economic Life convened by the Federal Council of Churches, "When the moral issue is clear, official church bodies should not hesitate to speak on legislative questions."<sup>6</sup>

A significant indication of the growing recognition of this obligation is to be found in the establishment of Washington offices by at least fourteen denominations or interdenominational groups. Some of these, like the Washington offices of the National Council of Churches or of the National Lutheran Council, function primarily in research and the distribution of information to the churches. Others aim also to bring the influence of the church to bear on the shaping of national policy. In the latter category, among others, might be placed offices maintained by the Friends Committee on National

<sup>6</sup> *Report of the National Study Conference on the Church and Economic Life* (New York: Federal Council of Churches, 1947), p. 18.



Legislation, the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches, the Council on Christian Social Progress of the Northern Baptist Convention, the Division of Social Education and Action of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Methodist Church.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to such political activities which are appropriate to the church as an institution individual laymen have a further responsibility. In their personal capacities church members are not bound by that distinctive function of the organized church which forbids serious compromise. They must make choices even in situations in which the issues are highly mixed. At the same time that the church cannot endorse war, it recognizes the obligation to engage in war of sincerely motivated nonpacifist Christians. While the church ordinarily should not support parties or candidates, its members must make such choices in exercising their citizenship. William James suggested that there is always some difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and that even a small difference can be significant. Even though these are the only alternatives presented at the polls or in legislative halls, the Christian, acting in the light of the more unclouded ideal of the church, must choose. As individuals or through political, economic, and social organizations other than the church laymen have the right and duty to participate fully in all political processes which may improve the condition of society. To refuse to act at all is an even greater compromise than is a critical choice of the best possible under the circumstances.

In making his choices the Christian must always keep the

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Keehn and Kenneth Underwood, "Protestants in Political Action," *Social Action*, June 15, 1950. See also Luke Ebersole, *Church Lobbying in the Nation's Capital* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951).

tension tight between practical possibility and the ultimate ideal. Never compromising too easily, he is called to maintain the highest possible standards in both methods and goals. Thus he makes a distinctive contribution to the quality of civic affairs. The political activity of the Christian roots in worship. Instead of receiving his norms from tradition or the community, he turns to God. He speaks not in order to have his say, but to express God's will. He acts in loyalty to principle instead of in deference to human pressures. Subordinating selfish considerations, he holds the public interest as his special vocation. He insists always upon moving society in the direction of a more complete expression of the way of Jesus in the confidence that God will provide the spiritual energies which are necessary for the achievement of the righteous community.<sup>8</sup>

The church ought to be inspiring its members to this sort of action. As it trains parents in the duties of child nurture, so must it increasingly train citizens for their functions in government. This involves the provision of a basic social philosophy, the dissemination of such facts as will clarify issues and facilitate decision, and training in the techniques of political activity. The pattern of life of the typical layman ought to reflect the concern of the church in this area. Within ecclesiastical circles it ought to be considered as normal for churchmen to carry petitions from door to door supporting a worthy legislative proposal as it is for them to carry hot dishes to the church social hall for a fellowship dinner. In the modern world God is to be served at least as significantly by the former activity as by the latter.

There remains still a third issue to be faced, and an exceed-

<sup>8</sup> Donald Frazier, "Marks of a Christian in Politics," *Social Action*, September 15, 1944, pp. 29-33.

ingly troublesome one it is. If the functions of the organized church and of individual churchmen are those which have been described, what then is the role of the clergyman in action in the political sphere? Ministers are commonly considered to belong in a separate category from other citizens at this point. Two recent articles in the *Christian Century* describe the experiences of a theological professor and of a minister who ran for public office.<sup>9</sup> Both were defeated, and in both cases it was evidently thought more appropriate that these venturesome souls should leave their previous church-related employment for work, respectively, with a government agency and an insurance company. Why should this be necessary? Is there any cogent consideration compelling this categorization of the clergy?

As does any other person who is responsibly related to an organized institution, the minister plays a dual role. In some situations he acts as the official representative of the organized church. In such circumstances, as when he is sent by his denomination to testify before a Congressional committee, he is bound by the limits set above for action by the church as an institution. He ought not then, for example, endorse parties or candidates for office. There are other occasions, as when he converses on a street corner or enters a polling booth, that he acts as an individual citizen. In this latter capacity the minister ideally should have the same rights and obligations as do other citizens, and his congregation ought to be ready to accept that fact. This principle should make it possible for ministers, provided that they clearly state that they are acting in their individual capacities, to take a position on controversial issues,

<sup>9</sup> Buell G. Gallagher, "The Honor of a Certain Aim," December 22, 1948; John G. Simmons, "I Ran for Mayor," September 21, 1949.

to participate in political campaigns, or to stand for public office.

It may be objected that this is impossible and that the minister of necessity implicates the church in his actions. The consequences of such an objection are, however, far-reaching and devastating. If the minister cannot separate individual from institutional action, then neither can any other person. Corporation executives must then withdraw from political activity lest they implicate their firms, and Rotarians must lapse into silence lest they enmesh their service clubs. Political activity under such circumstances becomes the monopoly of the self-employed and the unaffiliated. Conceivably gamblers and a few other scattered individuals might still qualify for steering the ship of state. Actually, of course, we avoid such social disaster by constantly distinguishing between the individual and the institutional roles of all sorts and conditions of men. The clergy should not be discriminated against in this respect. Whatever educational preparation, ethical insight, or spiritual motivation ministers have should be made fully available to the community. To disenfranchise or disqualify any professional group is to impoverish democracy.

A second objection sometimes raised to political participation by men who are at the same time ministers grows out of a stereotype of the clergyman as set apart in a peculiar status somewhere suspended between heaven and earth in a region to which the rough and tumble of political battle is foreign. The heritage of the Protestant Reformation should have modified this false stereotype. Indeed with the exception of a few vestigial areas such as political activity we have to a great extent eliminated this invidious spiritual caste distinction between the clergy and the laity. Seeing the minister on Satur-



day address a Community Chest or civilian defense rally does not make receiving communion from his hand on Sunday morning any less of an inspiration. Neither should the knowledge that he has during the preceding week testified before a legislative committee. As we come to understand more accurately the nature of the ethical task, we recognize that every individual idealist, lay or clerical, in a sinful society faces a continuous necessity of choosing the best possible from among alternatives all of which involve compromise. Observing the clergyman in his capacity as consumer eating eggs produced through an economy which is somewhat less than fully Christian does not discredit his sermonic messages. Why then should we be horrified if the minister in his capacity as citizen makes a political campaign speech?

A third group of objectors would insist that there is still another difference. While the congregation probably rather unanimously would choose eggs as over against permanent fasting, it undoubtedly would split on the question of which political party deserves a campaign speech. It is therefore argued that political activity by the minister, even in his individual capacity, raises a barrier between him and his people because it inevitably leads to strain or conflict between those defending opposing positions. This is true, however, only for those laymen who do not understand the nature of the group process. When such an understanding is developed, churchmen will recognize that group interaction can produce the most creative synthesis only if all participants freely and frankly state their positions. The knowledge that someone takes an opposing position ought not erect a barrier within the group nearly as readily as would the unwillingness to state a position. The minister who builds his popularity upon never saying anything that disagrees with anyone soon finds

himself speaking beautifully about nothing. This should become an offense to the thoughtful layman. The discovery that the minister shirks his civic responsibility to participate in public discussion might well become a barrier to his spiritual ministry within the congregation. As laymen who are committed to the group process expect their minister in the pulpit to state his mind on issues, so outside the pulpit on his own time they ought to grant him the right to exercise the full prerogatives of citizenship.

Many congregations, of course, have not yet come to this position. Ministerial political activity is still anathema to them. Or, more accurately, they are likely to react violently against support of a position opposite to their own. When the pulpit supports the policy which the pew approves, criticism often turns to praise, and the preacher is considered a courageous prophet of righteousness. In such situations for the sake of his larger ministry the minister may feel it wise to forego some types of expression of citizenship. This, however, becomes a matter of temporary expediency rather than of permanent principle. At the same time that this limitation is accepted, there needs to be a serious attempt to nurture a deeper insight on the part of lay people.

The church today needs to appreciate the position expressed by Henry Ward Beecher in a letter written in 1856. He said:

Allow me first to thank you for that sound sense which leads you to judge that, in such a time as this, a clergyman should be interested and active in the affairs of the public. . . . In a democratic community, it is not safe for any body of men to live above or outside of the circle of common citizenship. . . . When men speak of political duty as degrading to a minister, they dishonor and degrade our institutions and our primary ideas of

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citizenship. It ought to be an honor to serve the State in the ranks. It ought to be taught in the family, in the school, and in the pulpit, that it is a fault, a sin, for any man to be unconcerned in political duties. . . . When the framing of laws, the election of magistrates, the discussion of public civil interests, and the sacred function of the Vote, are regarded as degrading to a religious man, the Republic is already on the broad road to destruction!

We must exalt citizenship. We must make its duties sacred. We must excuse no man from the full performance.

The minister who always stops short of applying his religion has no reason for surprise if laymen do likewise. A protecting pulpit may become a "coward's castle." Ministerial mutes who, like the church at Laodicea, are neither hot nor cold come to have an influence rating of zero. They ought to ponder the fate of other useless things which are spewed from the mouth and disposed of with the garbage.

After this lengthy but necessary introduction a full discussion of techniques for action in the political sphere is in order. Especially since these strategies have been so much neglected, a rather detailed exposition is called for. For the most part the methods to be discussed may be used by the church as an organized group as well as by individual churchmen. In some cases, it will be noted, a device is appropriate only for Christians acting in their individual capacities under the encouragement of the church. The techniques with which Christian groups should be increasingly concerned may be classified under four headings: influencing party policy, winning elections, shaping legislation, and securing administrative action.

1. The first of these, while often completely neglected, is highly important because of the inherent nature of the demo-

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cratic process in the larger society. Where great masses of people are involved, the electorate must act through organized groups. Therefore political decisions in a democracy are typically made through the interaction of parties, pressure groups, and government agencies. Elections usually provide a choice between candidates and platforms previously selected by political parties. The concerned Christian should work especially at the place where policies are originally shaped and potential leaders selected. If he undertakes action only after candidates have been elected and a bill is about to be voted on, he is engaging in "death-bed politics." If, on the other hand, he can convince the group which originally presents candidates and platforms, he has in large part won his ends. It is for such reasons that some church leaders feel that direct contact with political party organizations is today "the most promising frontier for political action."<sup>10</sup>

This will require that an increasing number of churchmen in their individual capacities become active participants in the party organization of their choice. While the church ought not relate itself to political parties, it should encourage its members to do so. A recent publication of a church agency pointed out, "We and our children must be taught that refusal to act as a member of a political party is an abdication of our citizenship."<sup>11</sup> If "bosses" control party policy at the top, it is because not enough citizens are active at the bottom. It is estimated that there are about half a million precinct, town, county, state, and federal party leaders in the United States. Success at the polls depends upon the correlated labors of these functionaries. Anyone who takes political reform seri-

<sup>10</sup> Keehn and Underwood, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> *The Christian Churchman in Politics* (Nashville: Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1945).



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ously must be prepared to change the complexion of a sizable segment of this army of workers. When party organizations include a larger number of citizens working for the good of the community rather than for a job in the street department or a part of the city coal contract, then political life can rise above its present level. As Kermit Eby, an idealist with some experience in this field, has advised ministers, "Bring up your parishioners to be precinct captains and the presidency will take care of itself."<sup>12</sup>

This requires laymen first of all to become informed about party structure in their state and acquainted with local party leadership. They should begin attending party meetings and reach out to interest friends, neighbors, and fellow churchmen. As in any group, one must earn influence and leadership by his service to the organization. He who becomes known as a dependable worker is more likely to have his viewpoint considered or to be advanced to more responsible leadership. One should be ready to serve on any committee and to support every worth-while activity. This includes the raising of party funds. Such mundane necessities are as essential to winning advanced political goals as they are to maintaining a church.

All such activities involve co-operation with the precinct leader if he represents a wholesome point of view, or building a group to replace him if he does not. One should be prepared to suggest appropriate nominees, not only for public office, but for leadership within the party organization. A group with common concerns can often secure those of their own viewpoint as district chairmen or delegates to party conventions. One of the most important points in the political process is the caucus, or group of like-minded people within the larger

<sup>12</sup> "Political Advice for the Churchman," *Christian Advocate*, March 3, 1949, p. 10.

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body, meeting in advance to decide what policy to push or strategy to adopt. There is a great need for progressive caucuses right down to the precinct level.

A second approach to organized parties is open to the church as well as to those individuals who are led to invest available time in other ways than in activity within a party. Contact with party leadership can be maintained from outside the party as well as from within. While such lobbying may not be as effective as the intraorganizational approach, it is nevertheless important. Letters, visits, and similar techniques to be discussed later need to be used in the local community as well as in the national capital. Since ward and precinct politicians eventually determine the character of Capitol Hill and the White House, part of the energy of reforming groups should be devoted to the base of the pyramid as well as in the more usual missiles directed at the top. Sufficiently important to deserve separate mention in this connection is activity at major party conventions. Often it is possible for outside groups to participate in hearings before the platform committees of both parties. Such representations, supported by sufficient interest within the party, may secure the adoption of positions which later are more likely to become national policy.

2. In addition to influencing party policy a second major area for political activity is participating in election campaigns either for the selection of officials or, in states making such provision, for action on initiative propositions. Here again, activities in support of candidates or parties are more appropriate to the individual churchman than to the organized church. This still leaves a vast area of action on issues open to the church as a body. In general the same suggestions as

to method apply to the support both of candidates and of issues.

A first step is to secure the nomination of desirable candidates or the qualification of proper propositions. This is an exceedingly important step in the process. Idealists who absent themselves while party machines or interest groups select the names or measures to appear on the ballot find their later choices limited or even meaningless. Nomination procedure varies in different states. Either the party caucus and convention method or primary elections are used. In the former case activity within the party becomes especially important. In the second case the techniques of general election campaigns are called for. In either case a special problem is persuading qualified men to serve. The ideal candidate combines ability, integrity, a wholesome viewpoint, and appeal to the particular constituency involved. More churchmen with these qualifications ought to be encouraged to consider politics as a possible vocation.

Another important step definitely open to the church is encouraging citizens to register and to vote. One of the scandals of our democracy is widespread apathy within the electorate. A reliable expression of the will of the people requires a large vote. A light vote can be more easily controlled by political machines or selfish interest groups. Primary elections especially can often be dominated by professional party workers with their families, friends, and political job holders. Often only about sixty-five out of every hundred eligible voters are registered, only forty vote in general elections, and only sixteen vote in the primaries. This means an average of eight in either major party. Five then constitute a majority. In other words 5 per cent of the people can originally designate the individuals who eventually are to rule. A preoccupa-

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tion with personal affairs which leads to such a neglect of the franchise is a social sin for the Christian.

Both during the registration period and again prior to election day the church can stress the responsibilities of citizenship in pulpit, printed announcements, and bulletin board. In co-operation with other groups it can secure radio spot announcements, space in merchants' newspaper advertising, window displays, printed flyers, citizenship booths, or publicity to parents through the public schools. A registrar of voters might be invited to come to the church to register attendants before and after the morning service. On election day church groups might organize transportation or baby care for voters. Especially when a crucial issue of concern to the church is on the ballot, a telephone brigade might be organized to telephone every member on election day. If the law provides for posting at the polls lists of those who have voted, these lists might be checked during the day and special efforts directed toward those church members who have not yet done their civic duty.

Another major contribution can be made by the church in distributing nonpartisan information. This fact-finding function is especially important in a day when powerful tides of propaganda often hide rather than spread the truth. Election posters often insult the intelligence of the voting public. "Vote for John Blank" gives exactly no data to answer the question "Why?" Attempted descriptive phrases, such as "veteran" or "businessman," might cover both good and bad specimens in either category. The church can provide an important social service by disseminating objective information concerning the qualifications and positions of candidates of all parties. This may include an investigation of the past record of the candidate. For incumbents in legislative bodies a compilation



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of their previous voting record is especially important. Such compilations are often available for distribution from national social-action boards of denominations.

Another possibility is the sort of questionnaire to candidates used effectively for a number of years, for example, by the Church Federation of Los Angeles. This involves sending to each candidate by registered mail a list of questions covering educational background, previous experience, and position on selected issues appropriate to the office sought. There should be a clear understanding that answers are to be published and a suggested word limit to eliminate the necessity of cutting. Replies to the questionnaire are then grouped under each office and published as received. This sort of information may be supplemented by interviews with candidates or by inviting all candidates for key offices to address a church gathering.

A similar nonpartisan interpretation of issues can be provided by distributing party platforms, by publishing arguments for and against specific propositions, or by encouraging the presentation of both sides in discussion. One of the most important contributions which the church can make is to provide opportunities at the "grass roots" for the full exploration of all sides of controversial problems. Out of such discussions there can emerge a sharper delineation of the chief points at issue on the basis of which one ought to make his personal decision. Such sessions can become occasions for training in the discrimination and analysis which are indispensable for effective citizenship.

There will be occasions on which the church ought actively to campaign for or against an issue at stake just as its members individually ought also to work for the election of candidates or parties. In such crises, when a local option, gambling, or other important proposition demands the rallying of Christian

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opinion, the ineptitude of the church is often glaringly demonstrated. The days when the church can be dismissed by politicians as a negligible factor in these matters must rapidly be relegated to the past.

The first step preparatory to appealing to the electorate is to study the characteristics and attitudes of the voting district involved. Such matters as occupational distribution, national origin, religious affiliation, or political sentiment expressed in recent elections are important clues to the reaction to be expected to various approaches. A knowledge of key leaders and influential organizations will aid in mapping a more effective approach. Before jumping into a political campaign one ought to have mastered the biography of his bailiwick as thoroughly as the effective preacher knows the needs of his congregation before stepping into the pulpit.

The next step then becomes informing the voters through all the methods of education discussed in the previous chapter. Literature, sound trucks, forums, mass meetings, house parties for discussion, news releases, films—all these have a place in a large-scale mobilization of opinion. The devices which will be most effective in the local situation ought to be chosen. Ordinarily political meetings are less important than radio programs or speakers' bureaus made available to already existing groups. Pamphlets are likely to be less influential than billboards. The message must be sufficiently popularized to appeal to the man on the street without at the same time becoming distorted or inaccurate. In an election campaign it is votes that count, but for Christian groups those votes must be the result of conviction rather than of coercion. Politics may ordinarily be the conflict of interests masquerading behind pretended principles, but the church must be more objective. It will avoid the "engineering of consent" by pressure

or propaganda, in the worst sense of the word. It will depend upon more sanely objective material, simply enough stated to be understood and with enough emotional drive to lead to action.

One of the most effective methods of education and one of the most neglected by amateur groups is house-to-house canvassing. "Elections are won in the precincts" is a familiar political saying. It is by person-to-person contacts that the professional precinct workers locate their votes, multiply their votes, and get them to the polls on election day. Reform groups must also learn that it is through systematic precinct work that they make the most direct and intimate contact between a program and the people. Especially is this true where newspaper columns are closed to the group and where radio time is too expensive. It is on the legs of its canvassers that a campaign may stand or fall.

Preparation for canvassing requires breaking the area to be covered into units, training workers in essential techniques and arguments, and wherever possible preparing lists of voters by party or church affiliation. Canvassers should concentrate on marginal precincts which may vote either way, and on doubtful individuals, instead of using time on either staunch supporters or opponents. Friendly interviews, reviewing the important arguments and supplemented by selected literature, are the essence of the technique. Records should be kept and follow-up calls made where advisable. Workers who are tempted by discouragement should remember that where only 2 or 3 per cent of the votes may separate the two sides, shifting only a few votes can make a decisive difference.

In all these activities churchmen may find it possible to co-operate with other like-minded groups in either parallel or joint action. "Citizens' committees" may be an effective

device for supporting either candidates or propositions and for securing the support of newspapers and community leaders. While prominent people of prestige should be recruited whenever possible, it must nevertheless be underscored that a mere "letterhead" organization with a mimeograph machine and desk space in a friendly office is not enough. Mass membership groups are necessary if one wishes to win the people.

A last word of caution must be spoken regarding election campaigns. Having won over a majority of the electorate and having got them to the polls, a group may yet lose the election because of abuses in the election system. Unintentional errors or purposeful disqualification of doubtful votes may prove costly. A reform group should secure the appointment of watchers to observe the clerks and judges at the polls. These should be trained by experts who know the various devices which may be used to steal elections.

In several communities across the country Christian churchmen have organized for greater effectiveness at the polls. One such group is the "United Christian Citizens" of Baltimore, Maryland. Beginning with a study group at the Y.M.C.A. and a "launching" meeting attended by about a thousand persons, an association was formed "to unite Christian citizens for the purpose of making the teachings of Christianity, as defined in official church pronouncements, effective in civic life and to apply these teachings to political affairs," and "to keep Christian citizens informed and organized for effective action within the political parties of their own choice." The attempt to give political arms and legs to church pronouncements has led this group to urge a full registration and vote, to uncover promising candidates



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for office, to study the records of all candidates, and to organize for effective precinct work.

That religiously motivated people can influence elections has often been demonstrated. One such case study was provided in Twin Falls, Idaho, after the state legislature had legalized the sale of liquor by the drink unless a local option election denied this privilege. Evidently the liquor interests at first relied on the ineptness of Christians, their lack of funds, and the general apathy of the population. The dry forces set up a general citizens' committee and organized groups in each church. The town was canvassed for signatures to the petition asking for an election.

Until the number of names signed to the petition was announced, the liquor crowd remained indifferent. When they saw that the churches were in earnest, they began to collect their forces under the title of "the liberal committee." Proprietors of night clubs and smooth-talking politicians obtained almost unlimited funds, while the citizens' committee depended on volunteer services and small donations to pay for radio broadcasts, mailing expenses, and stenographic help. It was obvious that a battle was in the making.

Both sides urged citizens to check their registration and many who had not voted in years, if ever, suddenly stampeded the city hall. . . . On election day there was a steady procession to the polls in the largest turnout ever recorded in any type of city election, 75 per cent of the city's 6,487 registered persons voting. By a decisive majority of 652 votes the measure for legalizing liquor by the drink was defeated. . . .

Church people can be militant, and Twin Falls has pointed the way.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Frances P. Reid, "When Church People Are Militant," *The Christian Advocate*, August 26, 1948, p. 17. Used by permission.

3. Public policy is shaped not only behind the canvas curtain of the polling booth but also in the marble halls of legislative bodies. As a matter of fact, it sometimes seems that any resemblance between final laws and original party platforms is purely coincidental. A politically mature church must therefore also be concerned about influencing legislation. This is both the right and the obligation of every individual and group in a democracy. Free public discussion and significant participation do not end with the casting of a ballot. Democracy is the healthier for the continuing expression of citizens to their elected representatives. ■

Participation in the legislative process begins with the introduction of a bill. Any group has a right to suggest a piece of legislation which it feels is needed. Such a suggestion should grow out of accurate knowledge of a need and sound selection of a solution. If specific departments of government are involved, it is often wise to consult with their officials in advance either for information they may supply or for legislative influence they can exert if won over to the change. A bill should be drafted by sympathetic lawyers with experience in the area, or in some cases a state legislative bureau will do this after a legislative sponsor has been secured. The provisions should be written both to effect the desired reform and to win the widest possible support. There is no point in needlessly antagonizing important groups. Consultation with key organizations in business, labor, politics, or women's activities will help in drawing the most widely acceptable bill and in enlisting support for the measure. While a group will wish to move as rapidly as the traffic will bear, political realities often necessitate making haste slowly. Introducing an advanced measure may have educational value, but if the purpose is immediate enactment, one must often be content with

a less comprehensive change. A foothold, after all, is the beginning of a leap over the wall.

To introduce the bill it is important to secure the sponsorship of an influential and respected member of the legislature who also knows legislative procedure well. If possible, leaders of both parties should be enlisted. The support of executive officers, party leaders, and committee chairmen can also help to smooth the path of a proposal. Ordinarily a bill should be introduced as early as possible in the session. Strategy in guiding it toward enactment should be carefully planned with the assistance of sympathetic legislative leaders.

Once a bill is in the legislative hopper, votes are needed to grind it through and onto the law books. The most frequently prescribed lubrication for this process is "Write your Congressman." Letters to legislators, or to other officials, do have an effect. The person addressed may not always read the letter, but he does see the count of the number received pro and con. The late Speaker Bankhead is reported to have advised a group of new Congressmen to answer letters from constituents on the day they were received. He added, "Reply first to those written in pencil on tablet paper. They come from somebody at the head of the creek who'll be your friend for life." A large quantity of mail, especially when much of it comes from persons who are unaccustomed to correspondence and who write only when they feel deeply, indicates "a great big public uprising" which demands consideration. Even though one feels that representatives should vote their own convictions rather than be swayed by an implicit threat of loss of votes, he would yet admit that in a democracy representatives should have the benefit of the best thinking and most persuasive points that can be made by their constituents.

Various devices can be used to stimulate persons to write

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such letters. Mimeographed names and addresses of legislators can be provided. Stationery and tables may be made available at the back of the church. Telephone campaigns can be used. Groups might be invited to homes to discuss issues and to write. One church organized a "Pen Pushers" club which met weekly to write the "letters of the week" which were most demanded by the local or national situation. Congregational mailings urging action might include reply cards addressed to the minister indicating that the signer has written. In a very real sense in this modern world the success of a pastor's ministry ought to be judged by the number of letters his congregation sends to Washington, as well as by the number of accessions to the church.

A congregation should be trained in the most effective way to carry on such correspondence. Suggestions such as the following grow out of the findings of those who have had long experience with these matters. (1) Be original and sincere. Avoid printed messages and form letters prepared by others. Such "inspired" or "canned" mail carries little weight since it may not represent the deep convictions of those writing. Show that you know something about the subject and that you have done some thinking of your own. (2) Be brief and to the point. Write on only one issue at a time. Express your convictions on other subjects in separate letters. (3) Ask a question or two and request a reply. Indicate an interest in the Congressman's views. (4) Feel free to write successive letters on the same issue. Include new ideas or comments on your correspondent's replies. If a legislator simply acknowledges your letter without committing himself, courteously restate your question.

(5) Maintain an unfailing courtesy coupled with the maximum possible appreciation. Abuse may antagonize; a scorch-



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ing, threatening letter often does less damage in your own wastebasket than in a legislator's mailbox. Commend a Congressman—for a good speech or a favorable vote—as well as express disappointment at his unacceptable acts. Learn to say “thank you” as well as “please.” The former expression is such a rare experience in the life of a public official as to be impressive. (6) Learn your correspondent's characteristics, prejudices, or attitudes, and take them into account in phrasing arguments.

(7) Write early enough, ideally while a bill is still in committee and before a legislator has made up his mind or expressed a commitment. This requires one to subscribe to a legislative news service, such as that provided from Washington by the Friends (Quaker) Committee on National Legislation, or to watch newspapers carefully for significant developments. (8) Write not only to your own representative, but also to other key officials such as chairmen or members of the committee involved, majority and minority leaders, sponsors of bills, or executive officers. Enlist the aid of local leaders such as ward or precinct captains, county or state chairmen of political parties, or responsible individuals and organizations in the community. These can help both to build sentiment and to transmit an estimate of public opinion through the political grapevine.

Petitions are sometimes advocated as a supplement to letters. It is true that petitions to parliamentary bodies have had a long and honorable history. Their great weakness, however, grows out of the ease of signing them. Politicians know that many people sign petitions thoughtlessly and without any real convictions. Petitions should never be allowed to become a lazy substitute for individual letters. The same thing can be said about resolutions. Such actions can have value, es-

pecially if passed by influential organizations. They often tend to have a soporific effect on those who pass them, however. Those who lift their hand in favor easily conclude that they have done their duty and take no further action.

Resolutions when passed must be sent to the legislators concerned. High-sounding phrases which remain buried in a secretary's minutes do not change social conditions. Congressmen might be asked to read the action into the *Congressional Record*. Copies ought to be sent to local political leaders as well. A release should be sent to the press immediately, while it still has news value. If papers do not print it, the resolution can be incorporated in a letter to the editor. In either case clippings should then be sent to the legislators who received copies of the resolution. Above all, those who voted for the resolution should be urged to write individual letters as well. Unless such supplementary action is taken, organizations addicted to passing resolutions might almost as well find some other form of amusement.

Written communications need to be supplemented wherever possible with personal interviews. Communication with legislative representatives ought not be subject to the criticism which Paul feared from the Corinthians. "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.' Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present." (II Cor. 10:10-11 R.S.V.) Such lobbying is as essential a part of the democratic process as are letters to legislators. It becomes dangerous only when the lobbyist uses unworthy tactics of misrepresentation or concealment, unethical pressure or undue influence. So long as he avoids these evils, every citizen has a right to an oral testimony which rests on its inherent merit. Every group is privileged to supply

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its representative with data which it feels will help him to evaluate rival political claims. Official spokesmen for the church have as much right to attempt to persuade a Congressman to vote for certain bills as they do to influence a church member to stop beating his wife or a businessman to install safety devices on dangerous machinery. A recognition of the importance of such person-to-person contacts have led denominations and councils of churches to arrange a growing number of seminars in Washington and state capitals, to study how the legislative process works and to provide experience in interviewing officials.

Several specific suggestions may be helpful to the amateur spokesman. (1) Make an appointment whenever possible. If this is not granted, drop in at the representative's office at a time he is likely to be there, or ask a page boy to call him off the "floor" to talk to you in the hall. This latter expedient is a common procedure quite acceptable to most members. If it is not possible to see the legislator himself, talk to his secretary (not stenographer). (2) Study your representative's voting record and general attitudes in advance. Knowing the reaction one may expect is a guide to preparing the most persuasive case. (3) Master the basic facts about the issue you wish to discuss, including the legislative status of the bills involved. Have clearly in mind two or three points you wish to make, and be prepared to meet the most likely objections.

(4) Ordinarily it is best to go in small groups, although there is also a place for individual interviews. (5) Select a leader to be spokesman for the delegation. He will make the opening remarks, introduce other members, clearly identify the group represented, and guide the discussion, with others participating as seems best. (6) Be direct, brief, and friendly, but show honest and deep conviction. (7) Try to get a definite

commitment for some sort of action in support of your position—to vote or to speak in favor of the bill, or to read your resolution into the *Congressional Record*. (8) Take copies of resolutions or compilations of resource data or a summary statement to leave with the person interviewed.

(9) Notify your local press of the delegation's visit, and send your representative clippings of any news story which may appear. Editors are more likely to provide publicity if there is something dramatic about the episode—such as a “peace plane,” auto caravan, or “march on Washington”—or a leading industrialist, Indian chief, or movie star in the delegation. (10) Follow up your visit with appropriate correspondence. It should be noted that those who stay at home can also serve either by interviewing legislators whenever they return home or by talking to the home secretary or contact man whom representatives maintain in the more populous districts.

Another extremely important activity in influencing legislation is arranging testimony before legislative committees. In spite of the important role committees play in writing and reporting bills, they are often neglected by church groups. Hearings are attended chiefly by those who have rather large axes to grind. Churches may contribute substantial sums to temperance funds, and yet not a single member may appear before the city council or state legislative committee when the issue is acute.

Testimony should persuasively present the pertinent arguments and answer opposition claims with a firm undergirding of facts and, if possible, illustrations of experience elsewhere. Those planning the presentation of one side of the case ought to give time to a variety of organizations and yet avoid wasting the committee's time by overlapping testimony. Often it



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is possible for those unable to appear to submit a written statement for the record.

All these many types of activity in connection with legislation require the organization of support. Congregational and denominational social-action committees or the appropriate departments of councils of churches need to keep a wary eye on the "legislative mill," standing ready to call out the shock troops at the appropriate time. Often on a crucial issue all possible allies in the community need to be mobilized in a joint committee. A good illustration of this and other devices discussed is to be found in the process by which the "City of Brotherly Love" secured a fair employment ordinance in 1948.

Quakers, Presbyterians, Catholics, Jews, Negroes, labor and business leaders combined their efforts in Philadelphia through a Council for Equal Job Opportunity. . . . The main emphasis throughout the campaign was on continuous contact with city political leaders. Before the 1947 municipal election, all candidates were questioned on their stand in the FEPC Ordinance, and their replies were published in a paid newspaper advertisement. Small delegations of constituents called on all the councilmen and ward leaders, as well as flooding them with letters and telephone calls. . . .

The FEPC group helped to draft the city ordinance, and through conferences they kept in constant contact with the committee which had jurisdiction over the bill, and with its sponsors. . . .

Letters were sent to 500 organizations urging support of the bill and inclosing educational materials. Through the volunteer efforts of an experienced advertising man, the Philadelphia press—daily, foreign-language, Catholic, Jewish, Negro, and labor—received a steady stream of releases and five radio broadcasts were given during the week of the hearing. From a community thus awakened

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came many resolutions favoring FEPC, long lists of names on petitions, and financial support for the campaign.

At the public hearing on the ordinance statements were presented by a wide variety of groups, including employers, educators, social workers, veterans, laborers, and churchmen of the several faiths.

A staff member of the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education in writing the above description of the campaign significantly observed, "This is the kind of activity that should be a familiar experience for all Christians, if we are to make our principles felt in the community."<sup>14</sup>

4. After desirable laws are passed, they must still be enforced. Even though proper policies are approved at the polls, they may yet be altered by administrative decision. A discussion of political activities is not complete therefore when only techniques of influencing party policy, winning elections, and shaping legislation have been listed. Consideration must also be given to securing administrative action. City attorneys, governors, regulatory commissions, the State Department, and a host of other functionaries, both major and minor, have a great deal to do with social health.

Important as the subject is, the discussion at this point may be abbreviated since most of the techniques involved have already been treated under previous headings. Securing the nomination and election of men of insight and integrity is basic to sound administration. In moving officials to a desired action letter writing, interviews, and methods of public agitation are often demanded similar to those used for influencing legislation. Here also a positive as well as a negative emphasis

<sup>14</sup> Adena Joy, "City of Brotherly Love," *Social Progress*, May, 1948, pp. 22-23. Used by permission.

is called for. Citizens should make sure, for example, that they express appreciation to law-enforcement officers who faithfully apply the law, especially when such actions involve controversy. Officials are too often cynical about churchmen, being convinced that such idealists are eager to criticize or to ask a specific action, but then are prone to forget about the official, especially at election time.

Two distinctive applications of procedures previously discussed deserve mention here. Recall elections where provided for by law are a means of using the machinery of the polls to replace officials considered to be incompetent. An example is the removal of the mayor of Los Angeles in 1938, a battle in which church leaders played a prominent part. Another means for the control of administrative acts is the legislative commission of enquiry. After securing passage of the appropriate resolution a committee of the legislature may investigate the policies and practices of government agencies and make recommendations which may be written into law.

An approach not previously mentioned is that of legal action. The courts may be appealed to in order to restrain illegal activities or to enforce established public policy. The judicial bench has often been a barricade against those who would corrupt a hard-won reform. Our constitutional liberties or the rights of minority races, for example, have frequently been so protected against officials who were too eager to arrest "agitators" or to condone police brutality against Negroes. In causes such as these Christians should become increasingly accustomed to appear in court, and church agencies should provide greater employment for idealistic lawyers in filing briefs as a "friend of the court."

One of the most common complaints to be heard in even the best of ecclesiastical circles is "What can we do about it?"

After a thorough investigation of world needs and a rousing peroration urging action many a congregation has still remained in its former condition of congealed animation because it was sociologically illiterate with respect to methods of change. The content of the last three chapters should have demonstrated that there is no excuse for such helpless futility. A varied abundance of techniques is available to us. To be sure, they must be used in creative combinations. There is no substitute for an alert imagination in adapting strategy to changing conditions. Yet the instruments for social improvement are at hand. We need only to choose our tools, sharpen their blades, and begin swinging our arms.



## CHAPTER VIII

### COMMUNITY CO-OPERATION

OF THE making of organizations in our society there is no end. One is tempted to paraphrase the close of the Gospel of John and to suggest that if the constitutions and by-laws of all the organizations of this generation were reduced to writing "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." "First annual" conventions are so numerous that newsprint could scarcely stand the strain were it not for the fact that many are simultaneously also last conventions. Modern urbanized society is characterized by a specialization and multiplication of agencies.

The danger in this matter is that the large number of distinctive organizations may divert our energies into conflicting or competing channels. The opportunity to be found in the present situation is that a variety of specialized skills may be made available in a co-ordinated approach to community organization. The actualizing of this opportunity requires, however, a high level of community co-operation. If society is not to be immobilized by being pulled in all directions at once, it must arrange to have its major institutions pulling in the same direction. A people will take the most rapid strides toward community health if they bring their community agencies into harmonious co-ordination. The church, especially with its own ideals of communitarian fellowship, ought to make the achievement of such co-operation one of its most important social goals.

The application of this ideal begins with the church itself.

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So long as we inherit an ecclesiastical structure split like Humpty Dumpty into hundreds of separate denominational parts, we shall need to devise methods of co-operation. That this is indispensable for both practical and theoretical reasons is now widely admitted. On the practical side a ministry of maximum effectiveness is impossible so long as the present overlapping and overlooking continues. It is sinful inefficiency to endure the sheer waste of denominational multiplication and competition in some areas while we plead for funds to relieve appalling need elsewhere. Many towns and neighborhoods are underchurched because they are overchurched. Denominational pride has introduced more churches than such communities can support. Each is weak and offers a meager program of the same few basic ingredients—Sunday worship, church school, and perhaps a youth group. There is no more specialized ministry. Many vital areas of religious experience are overlooked. In terms of a functional program the community is underchurched.

Furthermore there are essential elements of our ministry which can be accomplished *only* through united efforts. The approach to radio networks for sustaining time has made it clear that, while we may be split on the ground, we dare not be split in the air—if we expect to be on the air! The tenacious resistance of social evil likewise demands a united attack if corruption and oppression are to be dislodged. Evil in the world is too strong for a divided church. As the foreign-missions enterprise made it clear that we need to present a unified version of Christianity in other lands, so the attempted application of religion to community problems has demonstrated the necessity of presenting a united front against secular culture. There are some things that are bigger than any single denomination. As Ross W. Sanderson said in an address

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to the Home Missions Council in 1946, "Comity is another word made obsolete by the march of events. It is imperative that we cease to use it, that we find a better one. It is time we moved out of the kindergarten stage of well-mannered courtesy into the vigor of mature co-operative enterprises."<sup>1</sup> It is ordinarily said that we ought to do those things interdenominationally which we cannot do separately. This implies that we will *not* do together what we can do denominationally. Ought we not come to say that we will not do denominationally what we can do interdenominationally?

This conclusion is undergirded by theological reasons emphasized by contemporary discussion of the doctrine of the church. The ecumenical movement involves more than a prudential joining of irresolute churches which no longer consider theological considerations to be of any importance. It is more than an amiable artifice to cut expenses. It is an expression of a deeply rooted need for Christian fellowship in life and work throughout the world. Ecumenicity is inherent in the very nature of the church as the body of Christ. If the church is a corporate continuation of the spirit of Jesus, this spirit can be fully expressed only in unity. Even the most optimistic possible description of the current situation, the fact that approximately 80 per cent of the total Protestant membership in the United States is to be found in only twelve denominations, is still not good enough. The same deeply rooted and unbroken fellowship which was felt by the early apostles again has fresh meaning for churchmen today. "We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." (Rom. 12:5 A.S.V.) A resurgence of this realization has produced a great new for-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by W. Stanley Rycroft, "Achieving the Ecumenical Ideal," in Nolde, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

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ward thrust toward church unity. William Temple called this ecumenical movement "the great new religious fact of our times."

In spite of such compelling reasons for closer co-operation certain persistent obstacles still block the path. Their influence is felt on the local level as well as nationally. Three in particular might be mentioned. The first of these is the inertia of habit. Custom has a compulsive power. We feel more comfortable in surroundings to which we are accustomed. A well-known ritual in a familiar sanctuary seems more conducive to worship than does a union service in strange surroundings. The conditioning of past experience may cause one who is "Methodist born and Methodist bred" to conclude that "when I'm gone, there'll be a Methodist dead." There develops a historically rooted denominational pride and prejudice. To fit a later generation Paul's description of the Corinthians might be altered to read, "Each one of you says, 'I belong to Luther,' or 'I belong to Calvin,' or 'I belong to Wesley.'" This produces a group consciousness which places the "in-group" in opposition to the "out-group." Such a sense of difference is often reinforced by social distinctions of class, race, or national origin. Where there has been a history of sharp difference, a deep-rooted conflict psychology has developed in some groups, motivated by religious zeal and fear, and expressing itself in rigid sectarianism.

A second reason for the continuing atomization of the Christian witness is to be found in differences of belief, both theological and sociological. It is the nature of religious faith to be considered important. This quality too easily becomes exaggerated into intolerance and rigidity. There are those who believe that if their denomination vanishes, God's truth will disappear with it. For them any compromise with a diver-



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gent point of view becomes a betrayal of essential faith. They have vested a particular theoretical formulation with final divine authority, thus committing a peculiarly dangerous form of the sin of pride. Particularly is this true when the point at issue is increasingly of interest only to antiquarians and has little relevance for our present crisis. While civilization totters in a world-wide quake, the discussion of modes of baptism may become the modern equivalent of the angels-on-the-head-of-a-pin question.

To be sure, we must preserve the freedom of choice and right of private interpretation which was the gift of the Reformation. The right to dissent is a holy heritage. Honoring it does not, however, eliminate the possibility of co-operation among those who are bound by agreements more basic than their superficial differences. We can abandon ancient denominational hostilities without violating personal or corporate integrity. This is demonstrated today by the fact that there are greater differences in theological and social viewpoint within denominations than there are among the major Protestant churches. It is possible to organize unity in diversity. Especially is this true when groups are willing to accept the democratic attitude of appreciation for opponents, rather than practice a semitotalitarian intolerance. Where there is a willingness to participate in a genuine group process, co-operation becomes feasible.

A third possible obstacle to greater unity is to be found in organizational differences. Equally competent men sincerely disagree about the most effective structural framework for the church. Bishops, boards, and congregational rights are matters dividing us as well as do varying views regarding sacraments, saints, or socialism. A form of organization may be related to a theology of the church, supporting either an

authoritarian or a democratic approach. In the structural realm, furthermore, unity may be impeded by the ecclesiastical inhibitions of vested interests whose prestige or emoluments would be affected by the necessary adjustments of reorganization. Even saints have difficulties avoiding rationalization at such points. Organizational matters, while of secondary importance to the basic functions of the church, nevertheless must be considered. Statesmanship must produce novel forms to meet differing needs. The tragedy of the matter, however, arises when considerations of organization prevent the church from fulfilling the function for which the structure was originally created. Here the religious institution faces a situation analogous to that of the political order. Both national sovereignty and denominationalism were useful social inventions in their day. Now we have come to a time when their perpetuation becomes an obstacle to the realization of many of the purposes which they originally were meant to facilitate. Both must now be modified. Churches place themselves in a weak position if they ask nations to delegate sovereignty while they insist upon maintaining their own anachronistic versions of it.

This leads directly to a consideration of the most desirable form which interdenominational co-operation can take. Casual and occasional joint projects, growing out of a general feeling of toleration, are not enough. Patronage of one another's suppers, co-ordination of ministers' vacation dates, or union Thanksgiving services, while commendable, are not to be considered terminal. This is the level of interdenominational fellowship in a great many communities, but it does not satisfy the need for ecumenicity. It preserves denominational sovereignty unimpaired, and it provides no continuing organization of *koinonia*. On the other hand, complete organic union among

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all major Protestant denominations is not an early possibility. This in some form is the ultimate goal; all possible encouragement is due those groups which are prepared to unite. Yet it must be frankly recognized that those groups are not numerous at the moment. While distinctive emphases continue to exist, there will be resistance to monolithic mergers which do not provide safeguards for such differences.

There is a third possibility, however, lying between the two extremes of occasional, informal co-operation and a complete unification of organization and program. It is the alternative of federation or "federal association"<sup>2</sup> in which each denomination retains its own polity and beliefs, and much of its distinctive program, but increasingly and voluntarily transfers sovereignty over selected activities to a central body. This is the approach used in local, national, and world councils of churches. It gives increasing reality to the concept of a unified church. Yet it allows churches which believe theirs to be a distinctive or advanced position to continue to make their contribution.

Merging forces may weaken a movement if it requires the adoption of a least common denominator, thus eliminating the advanced thrust of those prepared to go further. The possibility of this weakness is suggested in one of the findings of Douglass after a survey of local councils of churches. He concluded that the church federation movement is "reminiscently prophetic," having often been "brought into captivity

<sup>2</sup> The term "federal union" is sometimes used to describe this alternative. The same term is also used, however, to refer to a closer integration which is actually a form of organic union. In this last sense some look forward to organic union of those denominations which are closest together, federal union of a larger group of churches which are prepared to recognize one another's ministries and sacraments, and a still wider co-operation through councils of churches.

to ecclesiastical regularity and the mind of the majority" and being "haunted only by occasional memories or disturbed by infrequent dreams."<sup>3</sup> Communities are not saved by federation alone. Councils of churches must become functional and prophetic in the same sense that in earlier chapters this has been demanded of individual congregations. This fact is all the more reason for prophetic souls' participating actively in interdenominational councils. Also, however, the danger of diluting the stronger witness of more adventurous groups calls for the preservation of some denominational autonomy. This the principle of federalism does. Interdenominational federation expresses unity at all points at which a consensus is reached. At the same time it allows advanced groups within it to move as rapidly as they are ready to go. It involves joint action in areas of agreement and joint study in areas of disagreement. This is not yet an expression of the full ideal of one church, yet it seems to synthesize, as well as that may now be possible, the benefits of united impact and the values of prophetic witness within the group.

Already a surprisingly extensive array of pronouncements and program are being undertaken through the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Supplying military and institutional chaplains, administering relief and emergency work, providing ministries to migrants, Indian schools, and other home-missions projects, allocating foreign-mission fields, constructing common religious-education curricula, issuing statements on social issues—these are not minor matters. These are the work of the united church! Increasing the functions and support of federations of churches is the

<sup>3</sup> H. Paul Douglass, *Protestant Cooperation in American Cities* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1930), pp. 275-76.



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single most fruitful, immediately available road toward interdenominational co-operation and church union.

Especially on the local level, where organic union is seldom possible without prior national action, the council type is the form of interchurch action to be encouraged. It is in the local community, however, that the ecumenical expression is typically weakest. It is in town, rural neighborhood, and city that the spirit of ecumenicity must now be given the substance of solid accomplishment. G. K. Chesterton has said, "If you want to make something live, make it local." Success or failure here is the acid test. We must now transfer ecumenicity from Amsterdam, Geneva, or New York to our individual neighborhoods. Like world peace the united church begins on your street.

This may involve activating the local ministerial association, making it more than a professional club meeting monthly for the mutual edification of the clergy. Whatever tendency there may have been to linger long among the briar patches of disputation needs to be absorbed in a positive facing of demanding tasks in the hayfields of common concern. The number and range of joint projects sponsored by the group ought to be increased. A union Good Friday service might well be supplemented by a joint religious census or leadership training school. In many communities the ministerial association might be transformed into a council of churches with lay representation and a broader program. In some instances, where conservative groups are not willing to go along with this kind of transformation, the urgency of the cause may make it worth while to set up a more incisive, though somewhat less inclusive, council paralleling the broader association of ministers.

Such a council of churches is ordinarily controlled by a board composed of officially designated representatives of

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participating congregations (in smaller communities) or denominations (in larger cities). Its budget is raised from member churches and perhaps also interested individuals. Wherever large enough to do so a council should have at least a part-time executive. Metropolitan councils may have much more extensive and specialized staffs. For each major phase of the program a committee or department is set up. These departments should include at least (1) Christian education (to plan, for example, leadership training classes, week-day religious education, vacation church schools, joint youth activities), (2) evangelism (to conduct union services, religious canvasses, and evangelistic campaigns), (3) social service (to co-operate with community welfare agencies and institutions, and to co-ordinate Protestant social work), (4) Christian citizenship (to speak and act on larger social issues of race, labor-management relations, peace, economic problems, political issues). In addition there may, as need arises, be commissions or departments on radio and television, music and worship, public relations, religion and mental health, and youth or women's work.

In larger cities another basic department is required—that of survey and planning, or comity and church location. Especially in growing communities this is one of the most important functions to be undertaken interdenominationally. Comity has been called “co-operative church extension.”<sup>4</sup> It deals with the location of new churches and the planning of over-all strategy in providing a religious ministry for the community. This ought to be done on the basis of reliable survey procedures. Church location must be raised to the level of scientific city planning. Such a master plan for the

<sup>4</sup> H. Paul Douglass, *Church Comity* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1929), p. 5.

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religious life of a community can provide each resident with an available and an adequate church, and each church with a fruitful and challenging field. What ought to be done with existing downtown churches? How can underprivileged areas be provided a more comprehensive ministry? How many churches ought to be established in a new subdivision? Which denominations will provide the widest variety of choice for the residents of an area? Where is consolidation appropriate? Where should expansion take place? All these are questions which can best be answered interdenominationally. While the decisions of comity committees carry no coercive authority, denominations ought to abide strictly by the moral obligations involved in such co-operation.

Each local church needs to develop a more vigorous involvement in the multiplied projects of local, state, national, and world councils of churches. Unfortunately it is true that "usually both quantitative and qualitative participation by the local church in these wider reaches of church life varies inversely with the square of the organizational distances involved."<sup>5</sup> Congregations must come to understand the ecumenical movement, to support it more adequately from their budgets, and to expect to carry on increasing portions of their ministry through it. This is not a matter for the marginal time of an occasional interested clergyman. This is a necessary element in the community effectiveness of the church.

The circle of co-operation in attacking social problems must, however, be drawn to include even more groups than the churches of a community. Many other allied agencies exist, ready to add their specialized contribution to a joint program dealing with common interests. An amazing number of meet-

<sup>5</sup> Winston L. King, "Ecumenical Prospects in the Local Church," *Religion in Life*, Autumn, 1950, p. 583.

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ing halls and offices are filled every day with persons ready to make some sort of contribution to the community, from training fathers in bathing the baby to providing a pension for grandpa. One city of 38,000 population contained 450 organized groups. A rural area of 40,000 residents found that it had 44 civic and service groups, 33 governmental agencies, 20 religious denominations, 57 youth organizations, 44 women's groups, 30 business associations, and 45 educational institutions. All together 253 organizations were counted, and this list could have been greatly expanded if all neighborhood and other subdivisions had been covered.<sup>6</sup>

Many of these agencies are eager to co-operate with church groups. In one metropolitan area captains of police stations complained that ministers never called to get acquainted. They would have welcomed such pastoral visits for mutual consultation, if not sympathy! The church which is ignorant about available allies has its ministry by so much impoverished. Utilizing the experts is not an indication of weakness or inadequacy on the part of the church. Rather it is an indication of intelligent strength, since it increases the range of needs which the church is prepared to help meet. Religious leadership ought to recognize its limitations. In fields like medicine or specialized social work the service of the church is that of a referral agency. This releases the full resources of the church to use on its own distinctive contributions. There is no point in raising money to do a job which another group is already prepared to do. It is a case of spiritual negligence to have additional personnel available to serve the ends of the church and then to fail to put them to full use.

Consider the types of agencies which may co-operate in

<sup>6</sup> Eugene T. Lies, *How You Can Make Democracy Work* (New York: Association Press, 1942), p. 16; Hayes, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-91.



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providing a better community. Here might be listed, of course, every worth-while group in the area. Business firms make some contribution to the material welfare of citizens as every doctor's office does to their physical welfare. Only those groups will be listed here which ordinarily call for the most continuous co-operation. Among these are (1) governmental agencies, such as the juvenile court, probation department, or agricultural extension service; (2) educational agencies, such as schools, libraries, or museums; (3) social-work agencies, including case-work and group-work agencies dealing with a great variety of problems; (4) reform groups, such as temperance federations, citizens' committees, or labor unions; (5) certain general associations, such as service clubs, women's clubs, or farm organizations. To be sure, any of these groups may raise inadequate standards or may compete with the church program, as when the initiate into a fraternal order makes its ritual a substitute for the Sunday service, or when the high school schedules the senior dance on the night of the annual youth convention.<sup>7</sup> This ought not blind us however to the other side of the picture. Even the most superficial investigation will uncover the fact that at some point or other all of these groups are interested in matters of important concern to the church. Parent Teacher Associations go beyond buying a picture or some curtains for the school; they are also active about child welfare conditions in the community. Labor unions are interested in adult education and political corruption. The interests of service clubs go beyond luncheons and collecting fines from members to boys' work projects and go-to-church campaigns.

<sup>7</sup> For a more extended discussion of both the resistance and resources of other community groups see *The Church and Organized Movements*, ed. Randolph C. Miller (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946).

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How can co-operative action best be developed with such groups? Several principles may be suggested. First of all, religious leaders need to become personally acquainted with key staff persons or officers of other important agencies. A minister should visit the leaders of major community agencies early in his pastorate just as he would call to become acquainted with the teaching staff of his church school. Both groups are co-workers with him. To cultivate rapport some churches in smaller communities sponsor an annual reception for the superintendent and teachers in the local school. Closer acquaintanceship is especially necessary between ministers and social workers. It has been said that probably no other two professions with as similar fundamental aims have as great a misconception of each other. Social workers should come to see that not all ministers are naïve "do gooders," while ministers ought to appreciate that many social workers are not heartless, professionalized machines, enamored of psychiatry and snooping into private homes to fill out lengthy forms in triplicate. A similar misunderstanding often exists between religious leaders and labor leaders. The horns and tails which each of these groups sometimes pins on the other could be removed or at least shortened by closer acquaintance.

This preliminary exploration by churchmen should give them a general survey view of the pattern of agencies in the community. In a large metropolis there may be over a thousand social-work agencies alone. A copy of the directory of social agencies on the shelf in the church office is indispensable in such a situation. A personal contact with a well-informed social worker or council-of-churches executive or veteran minister may also provide an over-all interpretation of the work of existing agencies of various types.

A second important observation is that churches ought,

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unless in exceptional cases, to co-operate with the established procedures of other community agencies. There is no point in requesting a service which an organization is not prepared to render or which it may be forbidden by law to provide. Suggestions should be taken up with the appropriate official and in the proper form. It is important, for example, to learn how to make a referral to a social-work agency, with sufficient background information regarding the case, with preliminary consultation with the agency instead of a "shot-gun referral," and without planning for the agency nor promising the client what it will do.<sup>8</sup>

The church should always remember that its relationship with other agencies is a reciprocal one. Religious groups have a right to expect co-operative service. They must in turn, however, stand ready to do their part of the job, maintaining a continuing interest in problems referred and a constant willingness to use church resources for community welfare. Furthermore the church has a function in calling the attention of other groups to shortcomings as measured by the standards of religion, provided that it does so with a confession of its own guilt in similar matters. Community agencies may lack efficiency, skill, or genuine humanitarian concern. They may like the church sometimes be deficient in incisive ethical insights or equivocal in their allegiance to religious values. A friendly critic can help to improve available resources in the community. Such a critic must then also assume the obligation of enlisting better community support for the agencies involved. He ought to be ready to interpret their program more adequately to the people. As is also true of the church, weaknesses are often due to lack of the understanding or support of

<sup>8</sup> See John L. Mixon and Seward Hiltner, *Community Help on Pastoral Problems* (New York: Federal Council of Churches, 1948).

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constituents. Enthusiastic co-operation with enlightened leaders within a group, who are also anxious to make improvements, is often the best way to secure changes.

A common complaint is that "there are only twenty-four hours in each day" and that the average minister or layman cannot possibly participate so actively in all community agencies. This is undoubtedly true. A few of the most strategic must be selected for special support. In addition larger numbers of lay people can be motivated and trained for this sort of service.

Co-operation among community agencies is so important that continuing organizational structure should undergird it. In many situations this is being done through community councils. The co-ordinating council movement has accumulated sufficient successful experience that every progressive churchman should be intelligent about it. Arthur Morgan feels that "the community council may well be one of the most important inventions of American democracy."<sup>9</sup> The general concept of community organization described in the first chapter requires such collective co-operation for the common welfare. A community council—or community organization in the narrower sense of the term—can become a means for healthy and continuous interaction within the community. Out of this process there can emerge the dynamic consensus which is necessary to continuous reorganization at points of community need. To put it in the words of one of the classic discussions of the subject, "The aim of community organization is to develop relationships between groups and individuals that will enable them to act together in creating and maintaining facilities and agencies through which they may realize

<sup>9</sup> *The Small Community* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 145.



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their highest values in the common welfare of all members of the community.”<sup>10</sup>

The rationale for community councils is similar to that for councils of churches, councils of social agencies, or other similar groupings. As agencies of each of these types ought to be brought together, so do all types need to be related. This is necessary for purposes of correlation to avoid duplications and omissions. Agencies must get together to stay out of one another's way. A community problem is rarely the concern of only a single organization. Interested groups ought to supplement each other rather than to compete. Efficiency demands this economy of time, leadership, and finance.

Integration is necessary also to secure the greater force of united impact. Many community difficulties are tragically tough, relentlessly resistant to all attempted solutions. They require procedures which go beyond those piecemeal processes customarily used in the past. Numbers of community-wide problems are too big for a single agency. They require a unified general staff and a united attack.

Interagency organization can also help to develop community spirit, that consciousness of community identity which is necessary to group life directed toward common goals. The fabric of modern society is already strained by conflicts of interest and multiplications of groups. Cohesive elements must be introduced to balance the divisive factors. Hermann N. Morse points out how this applies to the church also when he says:

Our habit of not identifying churches with the community as a whole, but only with selective elements in it, makes the church

<sup>10</sup> Dwight Sanderson and Robert A. Polson, *Rural Community Organization* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1939), p. 76.

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unwittingly a participant in group conflict rather than a solvent of it. It also shatters the continuity of our religious appeal in every changing community and at the same time makes community integration difficult.<sup>11</sup>

So long as the church draws circles about itself to exclude the other side of the tracks or associations using a somewhat different approach, it repeats the error of the priest on the Jericho road. The service may go on in the temple at the scheduled time, but the man at the side of the road will not be there as a member of the fellowship. Whatever esoteric aloofness or institutional pride exists in any agency in the community must now be subordinated in a common cause. Community councils can become the community as a whole mobilized for the good life.

Such councils have developed in a great variety of forms, clustering around three general types. Which of the variations will be most suitable depends upon the specific community situation. The first, or direct, method is suitable to the small town or rural neighborhood. All residents are eligible for membership in what is often called a community club or association. The general meeting of this group may choose a community council to act between meetings as a sort of board of directors for the community in the general social field. One advantage of this method is that it is thoroughly democratic, allowing all to participate after the fashion of a New England town meeting. Its projects are therefore more likely to receive widespread support. This type, however, overlooks the existing group membership of individuals and may not give full opportunity to specialists or staff persons of other agen-

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Ross W. Sanderson, "The Responsibility of the Town and Country Church for the Rural Community," *Town and Country Church*, February, 1949, p. 1.

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cies in the area. It may become simply an additional organization, encroaching upon and alienating, rather than co-ordinating, existing groups.

A second type of community organization is the indirect form in which a council is composed of representatives of all groups concerned with community welfare. These include governmental, civic, social-work, educational, business, labor, veteran, professional, agricultural, women's, fraternal, or religious associations—in short, any group representing a vital interest in the community. In addition to designated representatives some members at large may be co-opted by the council. Occasional meetings of all residents may also be called. This method is less directly democratic than the first type discussed. It involves representative democracy in which the individual is related to the council through the representatives of groups to which he belongs. This procedure makes it easier to get specialists on the council and to co-ordinate existing group activities. There is some danger that such a council will be hampered by the inflexibility of organizations and by the preoccupation of their leaders. Unless these obstacles can be overcome, however, no type of community council can be significantly successful.

It is this indirect method of community organization which is most generally suitable, except perhaps in the smallest communities. In large cities community councils of this or any other type are usually organized on a neighborhood basis with possibly some city-wide affiliation. A metropolis as a whole is too extensive a territory to attempt to cover by this sort of intensive, primary co-operation. Illustrations of this indirect pattern are provided by the co-ordinating councils widely sponsored in California by probation departments and by the

Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council which will be described in greater detail later.

A third possible procedure is the compound method, which includes elements of each of the other two types. Under it a council is composed of representatives of organized groups plus representatives of citizens in geographical areas. The outstanding historical illustration of this was the Social Unit Plan which operated in the Mohawk-Brighton district of Cincinnati. This area was divided into "blocks" of about five hundred people. A public meeting in each block elected a council which appointed a block worker. These block workers constituted the Citizens' Council of the project. Alongside it was organized an Occupational Council of professional people representing various organized agencies. The Citizens' Council plus the Occupational Council composed the General Council, which was the controlling authority of the project. There are undoubtedly potential values in this procedure, combining some of the advantages of the preceding two plans. The theory was that professional persons on the general council could provide necessary resource skill and agency relationships, while the block workers both expressed the will of the people and interpreted any program adopted back to their constituency. The great difficulty of the plan is its complexity and the difficulty of securing participation in "block" organizations. Except under the most favorable circumstances for widespread citizen participation the best that can probably be done is to follow the indirect method, co-opting to the council such additional citizens-at-large as may be necessary to contact groups not otherwise represented.

What are the desirable steps in organizing such a council? Frequently a single person provides the necessary initiative for the establishment of this new thing under the community



sun. Such a creative individual might well emerge out of the church. Several lurking pitfalls can be skirted if this person is well informed in advance. It must also be said, however, that the general process is more important than the specific plan. Any list of suggestions must be adapted to local conditions and emergencies.

In the first place, a community council, like any other organization, should grow out of a strongly felt need which cannot be met by any existing group. The more urgently felt the need, the better the prognosis for success. Organizations born prematurely, like babies, may not survive. The necessary consciousness of need may arise from such varied sources as a startling event, a community study, reading about the accomplishments of a council elsewhere, or the stimulus of a speaker.

A second desirable step is to study the structure and experience of other councils through literature or visits. The general idea should then be presented to a few other individuals and groups. One community organization germinated as two ministers played golf with the village banker and the school principal. If reactions are favorable, a meeting of these interested persons might be held to discuss the idea more systematically and to draw up a preliminary plan for organization. As these discussions continue, an increasing number of persons might be invited to participate.

When sufficient interest and support seem assured, a formal organization meeting may be held. Invitations should be sent to all groups which ought to be concerned. Omitting any may lead to an indefinite period of alienation on the part of those who feel excluded. At the meeting an available representative of a flourishing council might well speak. The tentative plan for organization should be presented for full discussion and possible revision. Agreement becomes more likely

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if stress can be placed on a concrete problem which demands co-operation. When the plan has been accepted, formal organization follows. Agencies are asked to appoint accredited representatives, officers are elected, and appropriate committees organized. Adequate financial support must be secured from member agencies, the community chest, service clubs, or private donors.

Organizational details should be completed as expeditiously as possible in order that primary emphasis may be placed upon a program to meet the most pressing needs of the community. Wherever possible projects should be assigned by the council to already existing agencies. Occasionally it may be necessary for the council itself to assume responsibility for such items as can best be handled by the united group. For the sake of morale and later effectiveness the first common projects should be simple enough to allow an early experience of success.

The programs of co-ordinating councils have been as diverse as the needs of communities. Many of them, especially in smaller towns, have established community calendars to prevent competition for time. A comprehensive community survey has also often been undertaken. One council issued a handbook of community recreational resources, including even suggested routes for family hikes. Other groups have established summer playgrounds, "tot lots," community choruses, or "little theaters." Sometimes new agencies have been initiated, such as child-guidance clinics, health centers, adult-education groups, or consumers' co-operatives. Whether the need has been improved garbage collection or a community building, a local festival or national social legislation, community councils have provided a channel for united citizen action on the problem.

In selecting projects certain basic principles should be kept

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in mind. Program must always be functional, determined by existing local conditions and needs rather than by custom or the abstract formulations of absentee functionaries. Councils often need to be more discriminating, however, in their emphasis. They have frequently been superficial in their approach, attacking surface symptoms rather than the fundamental causes of major problems. Reducing infant mortality rates may require the unionization of labor or the passage of a federal full employment act as well as the opening of neighborhood clinics. Many local problems have roots extending far outside the immediate community. Alert co-ordinating councils will often find themselves involved in national issues as well as in local politics. To be sure, such issues become more controversial, and interagency solidarity may vanish, thus blocking joint action. Individual agencies must still supplement the united program with more prophetic thrusts. The council as a whole should be pressed, however, to deal with as fundamental a set of problems as possible.

Program should always be based upon adequate factual data. It is fallacious to assume that all communities are to be diagnosed alike and to be given the same treatment. Ordinarily this principle demands a community survey or perhaps a survey of surveys already made. In this, as in the planning and executing of program, the council should utilize the services of all available experts in or near the community.

The last statement must be quickly balanced with another. While professional people and outside experts have a resource role to play, no community organization will realize its full possibilities unless its policies are controlled by indigenous representatives of the general population of the area. Outsiders are always at a disadvantage, whether they come from national agencies or from a different class living in another section of

the same city. Not only do these peripatetic professionals lack the full understanding of the community which comes from long and intimate association, but they are likely to be regarded with suspicion by the "natives." Social-work agencies in underprivileged areas, staffed and supported by middle- and upper-class groups, have often met the attitude that they were superimposed on the community. They have therefore played a more superficial part in the life of the area than they otherwise might. Furthermore the most effective community organization is not only basically indigenous, but also enlists the participation of the people substantially as a whole. Unless the men and women on the side streets become interested and involved, their way of life is not likely to be appreciably changed. Here again the democratic emphasis is essential both to the discovery of the real needs of the community and to the widest possible influence of a common program.

To strike down into the "grass roots" a community council needs to lengthen the list of organizations usually invited to include those which are vital interest groups to the common man. This means including labor unions, veterans' organizations, and fraternal orders as well as social-work agencies or service clubs. The total program ought to have the enthusiastic support of the representatives of such organizations of the people. New lay leadership must be developed for projects in place of the overworked professional group usually called upon. Periodic meetings of the council might well be open to the public with full opportunity for any person to express himself. The average man is also an expert on certain problems. At those points he becomes the resource person while the professional becomes a lay person.

The mortality rate among community councils is all too high. Others not yet dead are in a coma preceding their final



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demise. One reason is the lack of roots which strike deeply enough into the community. Often the heads of the council of social agencies, the Rotary Club, and the ministerial association have spoken, but only certain portions of the middle- and upper-income groups have responded. Such shallow soil provides insufficient fertility for the full flowering of community organization.

A widely publicized illustration of a group which has avoided many of the pitfalls and achieved some of the possibilities of neighborhood co-operation is the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council in Chicago. Packingtown alongside the stockyards was once called "The Jungle" by Upton Sinclair. It still exhibits the multitudinous problems of an area in deterioration, having had, for example, the highest infant mortality rate and the highest delinquency rate in the city. The people, including Germans, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Poles, Mexicans, and Irish, have had little opportunity or incentive to cope with such problems. When an opportunity was given them with the organization of the neighborhood council in 1939, there appeared such varied results as a health center, neighborhood beautification projects, playgrounds, a hot-lunch program, community recreational events, job-finding services, and supervision of individual juvenile delinquents. Nor have the activities of the group been confined to traditional social-welfare measures. One of the first acts of the council was to urge a packing company to sign a contract with the union. The organization has also tried to bring political pressure to bear on both city officials and national congressmen.

This council is unique in its inclusiveness, over a hundred organizations having affiliated in the first year of its existence. Not only have such groups as social agencies or churches

joined—the latter reflecting the strong Roman Catholic influence in the area—but also the Chamber of Commerce, American Legion, labor unions, and various social and athletic clubs. These heterogeneous representatives of “grass roots” groups have made mistakes, and they have not always observed the high standards of social work or religion. Theirs have also been notable achievements, however, not the least of which has been the cultivation of a sense of co-operative participation. When the Chamber of Commerce solicits advertising for a C.I.O. picnic program book, and when C.I.O. leaders assist in a Chamber of Commerce membership drive, a new spirit is evidently at work. It may be, as one observer has pointed out, “that something important in the development of American democracy has come out of the ‘Jungle.’”<sup>12</sup>

To all approaches to a more wholesome community organization, whether they are those described in this chapter or in preceding chapters, religion has a fundamental contribution to make. This contribution is indispensable in a society suffering from the desperate sickness infecting our own. The church can produce a prophetic minority to a great extent emancipated from the compulsion of constraining custom and prepared to push farther and faster than those about them. Religion at its best promotes the spirit of discontent and the incentive to invention which are essential to progress. Religion should also supply the guidance of more profound principle and more incisive insight. Participation by the church in social affairs ought to raise the level of all community activities. The health and vitality of any society can be measured by the nature and degree of conviction of its people about the prime

<sup>12</sup> Kathryn Close, “Back of the Yards,” *Survey Graphic*, December, 1949, p. 615. Cf. Saul D. Alinsky, “Community Analysis and Organization,” *American Journal of Sociology*, May, 1941.

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values of life. The nurture of these convictions is the distinctive duty of the churches. Any group which tries to build a home, a community agency, or a nation without adequate religious values is doomed in advance.

The corollary to this is equally true. Any religious organization which does not motivate its adherents to improve their own homes, communities, and world-wide social relationships is dying. This stern judgment must be pronounced over all too much of the contemporary church. In the life of too many people the church is still an isolated segment. These thinly veneered pagans may participate in the ceremonials of the institution, including a one-hour weekly ritual, but the meaning of their performance penetrates only a shallow layer of their lives in their group relationships. In too many communities the church still stands apart, sheltered by wide landscaped lawns and Gothic walls of stone—and even worse, insulated by isolationist theologies or apathetic personalities. The church has not made its indispensable contribution either because of too narrow a definition of religion or because of lack of power and skill in implementing a more adequate formulation. Committed churchmen must now accelerate a basic transformation at these points of deficiency.

Communities should be fellowships nurturing all of their members into the kind of persons God intended. The love of God constrains us to provide the conditions for the full development of the personality of each of his children. The transcendent judgment of God falls upon all of our past efforts. The immanent presence of God empowers us with a strength beyond our own. The Spirit will yet prove to be more powerful than the sword or the atom. The church can still provide the channel for releasing the power of God into human society.

# APPENDIX

## OUTLINE FOR A CHURCH-COMMUNITY SURVEY

This outline is prepared for use in either urban or rural situations. It will be evident that some factors apply only to one or the other of these two types of environment.

For special studies which require an even more detailed outline see Colcord, *Your Community*. Since frequently it will not be possible to make even as detailed a study as is here indicated, items of more general importance are marked with an asterisk. It must be recognized, however, that subjects which present an unusual problem and which therefore deserve intensive study, vary with the community situation. For a score-card type of community study see Hayes, *The Small Community Looks Ahead*, Appendix A.

While the section on the larger community is here given less space, its content being more obvious and general, it is by no means less important. Section II, on the larger community, should be given equal weight with Section I, on the local community.

Some of the possible sources of information on individual items are indicated in brackets.

### 1. *The local community*

#### A. Geographical setting

- \*1. Community boundaries—natural barriers, transportation facilities
- 2. Peculiar advantages or disadvantages of topography or resources
- 3. Relationship to surrounding region and near-by communities

#### B. History and community traditions [published materials, library, newspapers (especially anniversary editions), Chamber of Commerce, old residents]

- 1. Significant changes in government, industry, population, etc.
- \*2. Important events affecting present structure or attitudes

#### \*C. Population characteristics [U.S. census, planning commission, utility companies, Chamber of Commerce, council of social agencies, health department, public-school records]

- 1. Size, in comparison with near-by communities
- 2. Density, in comparison with other areas
- 3. Trends—direction and magnitude, estimate of future growth or decline



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4. Mobility—percentage turnover in public-school enrollment, percentage of farms changing hands
5. Composition—sex ratio, age distribution, race and nativity (number and types of ethnic groups, customs and institutions, types and intensity of discrimination, agencies for assimilation)—trends in composition
6. Health—birth and death rates, disease rate (especially maternal and infant mortality, and tuberculosis)
- D. Housing [census, zoning or planning board, council of social agencies, banks, association of real-estate operators, housing authority, building inspector]
  1. Types
  - \*2. Condition—age, percentage requiring major repairs, utilities and sanitary facilities, median rents or house values
  3. Occupancy—number of vacancies
  - \*4. Tenancy—percentage of home owners
  5. Public-housing regulations; public-housing projects; other government aid
  - \*6. Zoning—present location of residential, business, manufacturing, blighted areas; distribution of types of agricultural land use; zoning classification of near-by areas; plans for future development
- E. Family life [census, family welfare agencies]
  - \*1. Marital status of population; marriage and divorce rate; types of family disorganization
  2. Family size; age distribution of children
  3. Typical family patterns and activities
- \*F. Political features [newspapers, election returns, city or county clerk, public officials, police, juvenile court]
  1. Form and functions of government; extent of government activities
  2. Important officials—names, qualifications, how selected
  3. Political party organization—"bosses" and personnel
  4. Political activity and sentiment of citizens—percentage registered voters, percentage voting in last election, election results—trends
  5. Important political influences—political affiliation of newspapers and leading citizens, reform organizations or citizens' committees
  6. Important recent political issues

## APPENDIX

7. Crime and delinquency—amount, type, age distribution, ecological distribution, causal conditions
- \*G. Economic features [census, Chamber of Commerce, labor unions, state or national departments of labor, U.S. or state employment service, county agricultural agent, city directory, classified telephone directory]
  1. Chief types of economic activity—important firms or types of farming, their characteristics, size and ownership of farms and business enterprises, proportion of farm owners and tenants
  2. Employment—number working, number women and children working, number unemployed, working conditions
  3. Standards of living—wages (in relation to minimum budgets for the community); extent of poverty; percentage of telephone subscribers, home or farm owners, etc.
  4. Social stratification—class distribution (on basis of occupational distribution), distribution of wealth, rigidity of class lines, relationships between classes, influence of stratification on community life.
  5. Farm or industrial relations—labor and management organizations and federations, comparative strength, quality of relationships
  6. Protective measures—program and adequacy of consumer organizations, government regulations
- H. Social resources [council of social agencies; appropriate city or county departments, such as health, education, recreation; specialized agencies listed below]
  - \*1. Churches [ministerial association or council of churches, U.S. census of religious bodies, denominational headquarters and yearbooks]—number in relation to population, number and training of ministers, membership, denominational distribution, class appeal, type of program, theological and sociological viewpoint, interdenominational and interfaith cooperation, number of unchurched
  2. Educational resources [school board, library, reports of state department of education]
    - \*a. Public schools—number, type, buildings and equipment, teacher qualifications, curriculum, number enrolled, special classes, extracurricular and community activities, adult education, parent-teacher associations, educational attainment of population, average school-leaving age

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- b. Private schools—parochial schools, nursery schools, colleges, adult education groups, workers' education
- c. Libraries and museums—number, quality, patronage (percentage of library cards, per capita circulation of books, type of books borrowed), additional services (clubs, etc.)
- \*3. Public information agencies—newspapers (contents, ownership, policy, circulation), radio (program, ownership, policy, audience), periodicals circulated
- \*4. Recreation [city or county recreation department, newspaper advertising, social agencies]—typical patterns of unorganized recreation, desirable and undesirable forms of commercialized recreation (types, quality, patronage), public and private nonprofit recreation (number parks and playgrounds and supervisors, little theaters, bands, hobby clubs, youth hostels, Boy and Girl Scouts, etc.)
- 5. Health—number of doctors, dentists, nurses, and public-health nurses in relation to population [consult annual directory of American Medical Association, classified lists in telephone directory, nurses' registry]; clinics and hospital facilities [consult list of approved hospitals of American College of Surgeons, annual report on hospital service in *Journal of the American Medical Association*]; voluntary prepayment plans; public instruction classes; public-health services (supervision of communicable diseases, water, milk, food, sanitation); school-health programs (education, examination, treatment)
- 6. Other social welfare agencies—for crime and delinquency (juvenile court, probation department, police and court practices), mentally and physically handicapped, public assistance (types of departments, policies, institutional care), child care and family welfare, economic or community improvement (Agricultural Extension Service, reform organizations, etc.)
- \*7. Agencies for co-ordination and community planning—council of social agencies, council of churches, Chamber of Commerce, federations of labor, neighborhood or community co-ordinating councils, research bodies, community-planning bodies
- 8. Important clubs and associations [council of social agencies, classified telephone directory, newspaper lists of meetings]—number, types, size, purposes, activities, influence in the community; percentage of citizens participating in the associational life of the community

## APPENDIX

9. Leadership—identity of community leaders, number, age, occupation or class, quality of their influence
- \*I. Attitudes of population [editorials in newspapers and other community publications, "letters to the editor," public utterances, election returns, attitude tests of selected groups, religious census]
  1. Attitudes on social and theological issues
  2. Attitudes toward churches—religious preference, affiliation, activity
- \*II. *The larger community* [books, reports, newspapers, journals of interpretation]
  - A. Conditions and trends in social well-being in stage, region, nation, and world
  - B. Immediate problems in political, economic, intercultural, and international relationships—nature, causes, comparative urgency
  - C. Fundamental issues in these areas (political, economic, intercultural, international)—basic questions which must be answered in any sound Christian social philosophy
  - D. Proposed alternative solutions—comparative validity, position of church bodies
  - E. Groups at work in each of these areas—aims, types of activities, ethical standards, availability as allies of the church
- \*III. *The local church* [congregational records, denominational year-books, direct observation, consultation with key persons]
  - A. History
    1. Age, in comparison with other near-by churches
    2. Outstanding events, notable successes and failures, conflicts
    3. Changes of pastorate, changes in program of character of constituency
  - B. Membership and constituency
    1. Number of members, active and inactive; number enrolled in various church activities; number of constituents—trends (recent gains and losses compared with changes in community population and with number and membership of other churches, gains and losses of specific groups within the church)—sources of new members
    2. Average attendance at important activities—trends
    3. Age and sex distribution (population pyramid, compared with pyramid for community)—trends
    4. Class (occupational) distribution [city directory, committees



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of key members] (percentages in various occupational groups compared with percentages for the community, percentage distribution of governing board compared with membership)

5. Race and nationality distribution in comparison with percentages for the community
6. Geographical distribution (spot map of membership)—trends
7. Attitudes, theological and sociological [attitude tests of sample groups, personal conferences, discussion groups]

### C. Resources

1. Building
  - a. Age and condition
  - b. Number and type of rooms (sanctuary, departmental and class rooms, social rooms, etc.), seating capacity
  - c. Parsonage—condition and adequacy
2. Equipment—appropriate seats, musical instruments, audio-visual aids, recreational materials
3. Budget (church as a whole and important subordinate organizations)
  - a. Total, local and benevolent
  - b. Division of receipts (percentage from pledges, other contributions, miscellaneous income) and expenditures (percentage to benevolences, salaries, building and maintenance, etc.)
  - c. Trends, compared with general economic trends
  - d. Potential support—adequacy of every-member canvass; percentage of members pledging; per capita contributions; distribution of pledges by size, age, and sex of the contributor; economic status and ability to contribute of constituency
4. Leadership
  - a. Organizational structure—administrative boards, number and functions of committees, organizational relationships (chart of organization)
  - b. Number and type of paid workers, training and experience, duties and activities of each
  - c. Number and quality of voluntary leaders, percentage of members serving as volunteer leaders, distribution of leadership positions, age and sex distribution of leaders

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d. Unused leadership resources, methods for enlisting and training leaders.

### D. Present program

1. Types of activities for various ages, in the areas of worship, education, evangelism, social action, missions, social and recreational, etc.
2. Participation in activities—number enrolled, attendance, age and sex distribution
3. Quality of program—materials and methods used, effectiveness in attaining aims
4. Relationship to the community—contributions to community agencies, participation in their programs
5. Relationship to the denomination—other local churches and national agencies
6. Relationship to other denominations—membership and participation in ministerial association, local council of churches, National Council of Churches, and other interdenominational agencies
7. Provisions for study, evaluation, and planning of program by the congregation

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